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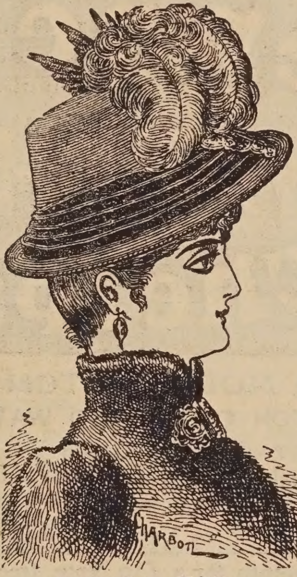

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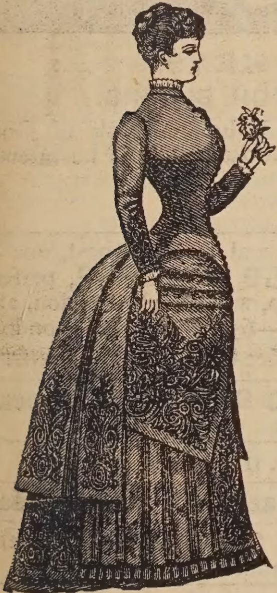

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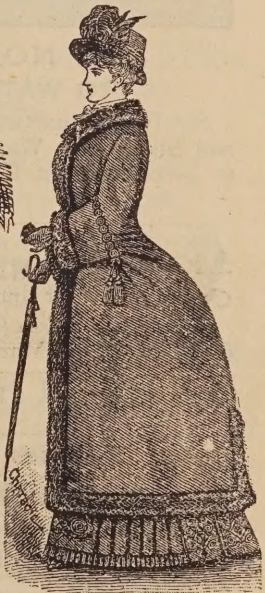

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An Impossible Story

BY

WALTER BESANT

A NEW EDITION

London
CHATTO & WINDUS, PICCADILLY
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TO THE

MEMORY

OF

JAMES RICE

PREFACE.

THE ten years' partnership of myself and my late friend Mr. JAMES RICE has been terminated by death. I am persuaded that nothing short of death would have put an end to a partnership which was conducted throughout with perfect accord, and without the least difference of opinion. The long illness which terminated fatally on April 25th of this year began in January of last year. There were intervals during which he seemed to be recovering and gaining strength; he was, indeed, well enough in the autumn to try change of air by a visit to Holland; but he broke down again very shortly after his return: though he did not himself suspect it, he was under sentence of death, and for the last six months of his life his downward course was steady and continuous.

Almost the last act of his in our partnership was the arrangement, with certain country papers and elsewhere, for the serial publication of this novel, the subject and writing of which were necessarily left entirely to myself.

The many wanderings, therefore, which I undertook last summer in Stepney, Whitechapel, Poplar, St. George's-in-the-East, Limehouse, Bow, Stratford, Shadwell, and all that great and marvellous unknown country which we call East London, were undertaken, for the first time for ten years, alone. They would have been undertaken in great sadness had one foreseen the end. In one of these wanderings I had the happiness to discover Rotherhithe, which I afterwards explored with carefulness; in another, I lit upon a certain Haven of Rest for aged sea captains, among whom I found Captain Sorensen; in others I found many wonderful things, and conversed with many wonderful people. The 'single-handedness,' so to speak, of this book would have been a mere episode in the history of the Firm, a matter of no concern or interest to the general public, had my friend recovered. But he is dead; and it therefore devolves upon me to assume the sole responsibility of the work, for good or bad. The same responsibility is, of course, assumed for the two short stories 'The Captain's Room,' published at Christmas last, and 'They were Married,' published as the summer number of the 'Illustrated London News.' The last story was, in fact, written after the death of my partner; but as it had already been announced, it was thought best, under the circumstances, to make no change in the title.

I have been told by certain friendly advisers that this story is impossible. I have, therefore, stated the fact on the title-page, so that no one may complain of being taken in or deceived. But I have never been able to understand why it is impossible.

WALTER BESANT.

UNITED UNIVERSITIES' CLUB,
August 19, 1882.

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ALL SORTS AND CONDITIONS OF MEN.

PROLOGUE.

PART I.

It was the evening of a day in early June. The time was last year, and the place was Cambridge. The sun had been visible in the heavens, a gracious presence, actually a whole week—in itself a thing remarkable; the hearts of the most soured, even of landlords and farmers, were coming to believe again in the possibility of fine weather; the clergy were beginning to think that they might this year hold a real Harvest Thanksgiving instead of a sham; the trees at the Backs were in full foliage; the avenues of Trinity and Clare were splendid; beside them the trim lawns sloped to the margin of the Cam, here most glorious and proudest of English rivers, seeing that he laves the meadows of those ancient and venerable foundations, King's, Trinity, and St. John's, to say nothing of Queen's and Clare and Magdalen; men were lazily floating in canoes, or leaning over the bridges, or strolling about the walks, or lying on the grass; and among them—but not—oh! not with them—walked or rested many of the damsels of learned Newnham, chiefly in pairs, holding sweet converse

> On mind and art,
> And labour and the changing mart,
> And all the framework of the land;

not neglecting the foundations of the Christian faith and other fashionable topics, which ladies nowadays handle with so much learning, originality, dexterity, and power.

We have, however, to do with only one pair, who were sitting together on the banks opposite Trinity. These two were talking about a subject far more interesting than any concerning mind, or art, or philosophy, or the chances of the Senate House, or the future of Newnham; for they were talking about themselves and their own lives, and what they were to do each with that one life which happened, by the mere accident of birth, to belong to herself. It must be a curious subject for reflection in extreme old age, when everything has happened that is going to happen, including rheumatism, that, but for this accident, one's life might have been so very different.

'Because, Angela,' said the one who wore spectacles and looked older than she was, by reason of much pondering over books and perhaps too little exercise, 'because, my dear, we have but this one life before us, and if we make mistakes with it, or throw it away, or waste it, or lose our chances, it is such a dreadful pity. Oh, to think of the girls who drift and let every chance go by, and get nothing out of their lives at all—except babies' (she spoke of babies with great contempt). 'Oh! it seems as if every moment were precious: oh! it is a sin to waste an hour of it.'

She gasped and clasped her hands together with a sigh. She was not acting, not at all; this girl was that hitherto rare thing, a girl of study and of books; she was wholly possessed, like the great scholars of old, with the passion for learning.

'Oh! greedy person!' replied the other with a laugh, 'if you read all the books in the University library, and lose the enjoyment of sunshine, what shall it profit you, in the long run?'

This one was a young woman of much finer physique than her friend. She was not short-sighted; but possessed, in fact, a pair of orbs of very remarkable clearness, steadiness, and brightness. They were not soft eyes, nor languishing eyes, nor sleepy eyes, nor downcast, shrinking eyes; they were wideawake, brown, honest eyes, which looked fearlessly upon all things, fair or foul. A girl does not live at Newnham two years for nothing, mind you; when she leaves that seat of learning, she has changed her mind about the model, the perfect, the ideal woman. More than that, she will change the minds of her sisters and her cousins: and there are going to be a great many Newnhams; and the spread of this revolution will be rapid; and the shrinking, obedient, docile, man-reverencing, curate-worshipping maiden of our youth will shortly vanish and be no more seen. And what will the curate do then, poor thing? Wherefore let the bishop look to certain necessary changes in the Marriage Service; and let the young men see that their own ideas change with the times, else there will be no sweethearts for them. More could I prophesy, but refrain.

This young lady owned, besides those mentioned above, many other points which will always be considered desirable at her age, whatever be the growth of feminine education (wherefore, courage, brothers!). In all these points she contrasted favourably with her companion. For her face was sunny, and fair to look upon; one of the younger clerical dons—now a scanty band, almost a Remnant—was reported to have said, after gazing upon that face, that he now understood, which he had never understood before, what Solomon meant when he compared his love's temples to a piece of a pomegranate within her locks. No one asked him what *he* meant, but he was a mathematical man, and so he must have meant something, if it was only trigonometry. As to her figure, it was what a healthy, naturally dressed, and strong young woman's figure ought to be, and not more slender in the waist than was the figure of Venus or Mother Eve; and her limbs were elastic, so that she seemed when she walked as if she would like to run, jump, and dance, which, indeed, she would have greatly preferred, only at Newnham they 'take it out' in lawn-tennis. And whatever might be the course of life marked out by herself, it was quite certain to the intelligent observer that before long Love the invincible—Love that laughs at plots, plans, conspiracies, and designs—would upset them all, and trace out quite another line of life for her, and most probably the most commonplace line of all.

'Your life, Constance,' she went on, 'seems to me the most happy and the most fortunate. How nobly you have vindicated the intellect of women by your degree!'

'No, my dear:' Constance shook her head sadly. 'No; only partly vindicated our intellect; remember I was but fifth Wrangler, and there were four men—men, Angela—above me. I wanted to be senior.'

'Everybody knows that the fifth is always as good as the first.' Constance, however, shook her head at this daring attempt at consolation. 'At all events, Constance, you will go on to prove it by your original papers when you publish your researches. You will lecture like Hypatia; you will have the undergraduates leaving the men and crowding to your theatre. You will become the greatest mathematician in Cambridge; you will be famous for ever. You will do better than man himself, even on man's most exalted level of intellectual strength.'

The pale cheek of the student flushed.

'I do not expect to do better than men,' she replied humbly. 'It will be enough if I do as well. Yes, my dear, all my life, short or long, shall be given to science. I will have no love in it, or marriage, or—or—anything of that kind at all.'

'Nor will I,' said the other, stoutly, yet with apparent effort. 'Marriage spoils a woman's career; we must live our life to its utmost, Constance.'

'We must, Angela. It is the only thing in this world of doubt that is a clear duty. I owe mine to science. You, my dear, to——'

She would have said to 'Political Economy,' but a thought checked her. For a singular thing had happened only the day before. This friend of hers, this Angela Messenger, who had recently illustrated the strength of woman's intellect by passing a really brilliant examination in that particular science, astonished her friends at a little informal meeting in the library by an oration In this speech she went out of her way to pour contempt upon Political Economy. It was a so-called science, she said, not a science at all: a collection of theories impossible of proof. It treated of men and women as skittles, it ignored the principal motives of action, it had been put together for the most part by doctrinaires who lived apart, and knew nothing about men and less about women, and it was the favourite study, she cruelly declared, of her own sex, because it was the most easily crammed and made the most show. As for herself, she declared that for all the good it had done her, she might just as well have gone through a course of æsthetics or studied the symbols of advanced Ritualism.

Therefore, remembering the oration, Constance Woodcote hesitated. To what Cause (with a capital C) should Angela Messenger devote her life?

'I will tell you presently,' said Angela, 'how I shall begin my life. Where the beginning will lead me, I cannot tell.'

Then there was silence for a while. The sun sank lower and the setting rays fell upon the foliage, and every leaf showed like a leaf of gold, and the river lay in shadow and became ghostly, and the windows of Trinity library opposite to them glowed, and the New Court of St. John's at their left hand became like unto the palace of Kubla Khan.

'Oh!' sighed the young mathematician, 'I shall never be satisfied till Newnham crosses the river. We must have one of these colleges for ourselves. We must have King's. Yes, King's will be the best. And oh! how differently we shall live from the so-called students who are now smoking tobacco in each other's rooms, or playing billiards, or even cards—the superior sex!'

'As for us, we shall presently go back to our rooms, have a cup of tea and a talk, my dear. Then we shall go to bed. As regards the men, those of your mental level, Constance, do not, I suppose, play billiards; nor do they smoke tobacco. Undergraduates are not all students, remember. Most of them are nothing but mere Pass-men who will become curates.'

Two points in this speech seem to call for remark. First, the singular ignorance of mankind, common to all women, which led the girl to believe that a great man of science is superior to the pleasures of the weaker brethren; for they cannot understand the delights of fooling. The second point is —— but it may be left to those who read as they run.

Then they rose and walked slowly under the grand old trees of Trinity Avenue, facing the setting sun, so that when they came to the end and turned to the left, it seemed as if they plunged into night. And presently they came to the gates of Newnham, the newer Newnham, with its trim garden, and Queen Anne mansion. It grates upon one that the beginnings of a noble and lasting inform should be housed in a palace built in the conceited fashion of the day. What will they say of it in fifty years, when the fashion has changed and new styles reign?

'Come,' said Angela, 'come into my room. Let my last evening in the dear place be spent with you, Constance.'

Angela's own room was daintily furnished and adorned with as many pictures, pretty things, books, and *bric-à-brac* as the narrow dimensions of a Newnham cell will allow. In a more advanced Newnham there will be two rooms for each student, and these will be larger.

The girls sat by the open window: the air was soft and sweet. A bunch of cowslips from the Coton meadows perfumed the room: there was the jug-jug of a nightingale in some tree not far off; opposite them were the lights of the other Newnham.

'The last night!' said Angela. 'I can hardly believe that I go down to-morrow.'

Then she was silent again.

'My life,' she went on, speaking softly in the twilight, 'begins to-morrow. What am I to do with it? Your own solution seems so easy because you are clever and you have no money, while I, who am—well, dear, not devoured by thirst for learning—have got so much. To begin with, there is the Brewery. You cannot escape from a big Brewery if it belongs to you. You cannot hide it away. Messenger, Marsden, and Company's Stout, their XXX, their Old and Mild, their Bitter, their Family Ales (that particularly at eight-and-six the nine-gallon cask, if paid for on delivery), their drays, their huge horses, their strong men, whose very appearance advertises the beer, and makes the weak-kneed and the narrow-chested rush to Whitechapel—my dear, these things stare one in the face wherever you go. I am that Brewery, as you know. I am Messenger, Marsden, and Company, myself, the sole partner in what my lawyer sweetly calls the Concern. Nobody else is concerned in it. It is—alas!—my own Great Concern, a dreadful responsibility.'

'Why? Your people manage it for you.'

'Yes—oh! yes—they do. And whether they manage it badly or well I do not know; whether they make wholesome beer or bad, whether they treat their clerks and workmen generously or meanly, whether the name of the Company is beloved or hated, I do not know. Perhaps the very making of beer at all is a wickedness.'

'But—Angela,' the other interrupted; 'it is no business of yours. Naturally, wages are regulated by supply and——'

'No, my dear. That is political economy. I prefer the good old English plan. If I employ a man, and he works faithfully, I should like that man to feel that he grows every day worth to me more than his marketable value.'

Constance was silenced.

'Then, beside the Brewery,' Angela went on, 'there is an unconscionable sum of money in the Funds.'

'There, at least,' said her friend, 'you need feel no scruple of conscience.'

'But indeed I do; for how do I know that it is right to keep all this money idle? A hundred pounds saved and put into the Funds means three pounds a year. It is like a perennial stream flowing from a hidden reservoir in a hillside. But this stream, in my case, does no good at all. It neither fertilises the soil nor is it drunk by man or beast, nor does it turn mills, nor is it a beautiful thing to look upon, nor does its silver current flow by banks of flowers or fall in cascades. It all runs away, and makes another reservoir in another hillside. My dear, it is a stream of compound interest, which is constantly getting deeper and broader and stronger, and yet is never of the least use, and turns no wheels. Now, what am I to do with this money?'

'Endow Newnham; there, at least, is something practical.'

'I will found some scholarships, if you please, later on, when you have made your own work felt. Again, there are my houses in the East End.'

'Sell them.'

'That is only to shift the responsibility. My dear, I have streets of houses. They all lie about Whitechapel way. My grandfather, John Messenger, bought houses, I believe, just as other people buy apples, by the peck, or some larger measure, a reduction being made on taking a quantity. There they are, and mostly inhabited.'

'You have agents, I suppose?' said Constance, unsympathisingly. 'It is their duty to see that the houses are well kept.'

'Yes, I have agents. But they cannot absolve me from responsibility.'

'Then,' asked Constance, 'what do you mean to do?'

'I am a native almost of Whitechapel. My grandfather, who succeeded to the Brewery, was born there—his father was also a Brewer; his grandfather is, I believe, prehistoric: he lived there long after his son, my father, was born. When he moved to Bloomsbury Square he thought he was getting into quite a fashionable quarter; and he only went to Portman Square because he desired me to go into society. I am so rich that I shall quite certainly be welcomed in society. But, my dear, Whitechapel and its neighbourhood are my proper sphere. Why, my very name! I reek of beer; I am all beer; my blood is beer. Angela Marsden Messenger! What could more plainly declare my connection with Messenger, Marsden, and Company? I only wonder that he did not call me Marsden-and-Company Messenger.'

'But—Angela . . .'

'He would, Constance, if he had thought of it. For, you see, I was the heiress from the very beginning, because my father died before my birth. And my grandfather intended me to become the perfect Brewer, if a woman can attain to so high an ideal. Therefore I was educated in the necessary and fitting lines. They taught me the industries of England, the arts and manufactures, mathematics, accounts, the great outlets of trade, book-keeping, mechanics—all those things that are practical. How it happened that I was allowed to learn music I do not know. Then, when I grew up, I was sent here by him, because the very air of Cambridge, he thought, makes people exact; and women are so prone to be inexact. I was to read while I was here all the books about Political and Social Economy. I have also learned for business purposes two or three languages. I am now finished. I know all the theories about people, and I don't believe any of them will work. Therefore, my dear, I shall get to know the people before I apply them.'

'Was your grandfather a student of Political Economy?'

'Not at all. But he had a respect for justice, and he wanted me to be just. It is so difficult, he used to say, for a woman to be just. For either she flies into a rage and punishes with excess, or she takes pity and forgives. As for himself, he was as hard as nails, and the people knew it.'

'And your project?'

'It is very simple. I efface myself. I vanish. I disappear.'

'What?'

'If anybody asks where I am, no one will know, except you, my dear; and you will not tell.'

'You will be in——'

'In Whitechapel, or thereabouts. Your Angela will be a dressmaker, and she will live by herself, and become—what her great-grandmother was—one of the people.'

'You will not like it at all.'

'Perhaps not; but I am weary of theories, facts, statistics. I want flesh and blood. I want to feel myself a part of this striving, eager, anxious humanity, on whose labours I live in comfort, by whom I have been educated, to whom I owe all, and for whom I have done nothing—no, nothing at all, selfish wretch that I am!'

She clasped her hands with a fine gesture of remorse.

'Oh! woman of science,' she cried; 'you sit upon the heights, and you can disregard—because it is your right—the sorrows and the joys of the world. But I cannot. I belong to the People—with a great, big P, my dear—I cannot bear to go on living by their toil and giving nothing in return. What a dreadful thing is a She-Dives!'

'I confess,' said Constance, coldly, 'that I have always regarded wealth as a means for leading the higher life—the life of study and research—unencumbered by the sordid aims and mean joys of the vulgar herd.'

'It is possible and right for you to live apart, my dear. It is impossible, because it would be wrong, for me.'

'But—alone? You will venture into the dreadful region alone?'

'Quite alone, Constance.'

'And—and—your reputation, Angela?'

Angela laughed merrily.

'As for my reputation, my dear, it may take care of itself. Those of my friends who think I am not to be trusted may transfer their affection to more worthy objects. The first thing in the emancipation of the sex, Constance, is equal education. The next is——'

'What?' for Angela paused.

She drew forth from her pocket a small bright instrument of steel, which glittered in the twilight. Not a revolver, dear readers.

'The next,' she said, brandishing the weapon before Constance's eyes, 'is—the LATCH-KEY.'

PROLOGUE.

Part II.

The time was eleven in the forenoon; the season was the month of roses; the place was a room on the first floor at the Park-end of Piccadilly—a noisy room, because the windows were open, and there was a great thunder and rattle of cabs, omnibuses, and all kinds of vehicles. When this noise became, as it sometimes did, intolerable, the occupant of the room shut his double windows, and immediately there was a great calm, with a melodious roll of distant wheels, like the buzzing of bees about the marigolds on a summer afternoon. With the double window a man may calmly sit down amid even the roar of Cheapside, or the never-ending cascade of noise at Charing Cross.

The room was furnished with taste; the books on the shelves were well bound, as if the owner took a proper pride in them, as indeed was the case. There were two or three good pictures; there was a girl's head in marble; there were cards and invitations lying on the mantelshelf and in a rack beside the clock. Everybody could tell at the first look of the room that it was a bachelor's den. Also because nothing was new, and because there were none of the peacockeries, whims and fancies, absurdities, fads and fashions, gimcrackeries—the presence of which does always and infallibly proclaim the chamber of a young man—this room manifestly belonged to a bachelor who was old in the profession. In fact, the owner of the chambers, of which this was the breakfast, morning, and dinner room, whenever he dined at home, was seated in an armchair beside a breakfast table, looking straight before him, with a face filled with anxiety. An honest, ugly, pleasing, rugged, attractive face, whose features were carved one day when Dame Nature was benevolently disposed, but had a blunt chisel.

'I always told him,' he muttered, 'that he should learn the whole of his family history as soon as he was three-and-twenty years of age. One must keep such promises. Yet it would have been better that he should never know. But then it might have been found out, and that would have been far worse. Yet, how could it have been found out? No; that is ridiculous.'

He mused in silence. In his fingers he held a cigar which he had lit, but allowed to go out again. The morning paper was lying on the table, unopened.

'How will the boy take it?' he asked; 'will he take it crying? Or will he take it laughing?'

He smiled, picturing to himself the 'boy's' astonishment.

Looking at the man more closely, one became aware that he was really a very pleasant-looking person. He was about five-and-forty years of age, and he wore a full beard and moustache, after the manner of his contemporaries, with whom a beard is still considered a manly ornament to the face. The beard was brown, but it had begun to show, as wine merchants say of port, the 'appearance of age.' In some light, there was more grey than brown. His dark-brown hair, however, retained its original thickness of thatch, and was as yet untouched by any streak of grey. Seeing that he belonged to one of the oldest and best of English families, one might have expected something of that delicacy of feature which some of us associate with birth. But, as has already been said, his face was rudely chiselled, his complexion was ruddy, and he looked as robust as a ploughboy; yet he had the air of an English gentleman, and that ought to satisfy anybody. And he was the younger son of a Duke, being by courtesy Lord Jocelyn Le Breton.

While he was thus meditating, there was a quick step on the stair, and the subject of his thoughts entered the room.

This interesting young man was a much more aristocratic person to look upon than his senior. He paraded, so to speak, at every point, the thoroughbred air. His thin and delicate nose, his clear eye, his high though narrow forehead, his well-cut lip, his firm chin, his pale cheek, his oval face, the slim figure, the thin, long fingers, the spring of his walk, the poise of his head—what more could one expect even from the descendant of All the Howards? But this morning the pallor of his cheek was flushed as if with some disquieting news.

'Good morning, Harry,' said Lord Jocelyn, quietly.

Harry returned the greeting. Then he threw upon the table a small packet of papers.

'There, sir, I have read them; thank you for letting me see them.'

'Sit down, boy, and let us talk; will you have a cigar? No?

A cigarette, then? No? You are probably a little upset by this —new—unexpected revelation?'

'A *little* upset!' repeated the young man, with a short laugh.

'To be sure—to be sure—one could expect nothing else; now sit down, and let us talk over the matter calmly.'

The young man sat down, but he did not present the appearance of one inclined to talk over the matter calmly.

'In novels,' said Lord Jocelyn, 'it is always the good fortune of young gentlemen brought up in ignorance of their parentage to turn out, when they do discover their origin, the heirs to an illustrious name; I have always admired that in novels. In your case, my poor Harry, the reverse is the case; the distinction ought to console you.'

'Why was I not told before?'

'Because the boyish brain is more open to prejudice than that of the adult: because, among your companions, you certainly would have felt at a disadvantage had you known yourself to be the son of a——'

'You always told me,' said Harry, 'that my father was in the army?'

'What do you call a Sergeant in a line regiment, then?'

'Oh! of course, but among gentlemen—I mean—among the set with whom I was brought up, to be in the army means to have a commission.'

'Yes; that was my pardonable deception. I thought that you would respect yourself more if you felt that your father, like the fathers of your friends, belonged to the upper class. Now, my dear boy, you will respect yourself just as much, although you know that he was but a Sergeant, and a brave fellow who fell at my side in the Indian Mutiny.'

'And my mother?'

'I did not know her; she was dead before I found you out, and took you from your Uncle Bunker.'

'Uncle Bunker!' Harry laughed, with a little bitterness. 'Uncle Bunker! Fancy asking one's Uncle Bunker to dine at the club! What is he by trade?'

'He is something near a big Brewery, a Brewery Boom, as the Americans say. What he actually is, I do not quite know. He lives, if I remember rightly, at a place, an immense distance from here, called Stepney.'

'Do you know anything more about my father's family?'

'No! the Sergeant was a tall, handsome, well set-up man; but I know nothing about his connections. His name, if that is any help to you, was, was—in fact'—here Lord Jocelyn assumed an air of ingratiating sweetness—'was—Goslett—Goslett; not a bad name, I think, pronounced with perhaps a leaning to an accent on the last syllable. Don't you agree with me, Harry?'

'Oh! yes, it will do. Better than Bunker, and not so good as Le Breton. As for my Christian name, now?'

'There I ventured on one small variation.'

'Am I not, then, even Harry?'

'Yes, yes, yes, you are—now; formerly you were Harry without the aitch. It is the custom of the neighbourhood in which you were born.'

'I see! If I go back among my own people, I shall be, then, once more 'Arry?'

'Yes; and shout on penny steamers, and brandish pint bottles of stout, and sing along the streets, in simple abandonment to Arcadian joy; and trample on flowers; and break pretty things for wantonness; and exercise a rude but effective wit, known among the ancients as Fescennine, upon passing ladies; and get drunk o' nights; and walk the streets with a pipe in your mouth. That is what you would be, if you went back, my dear child.'

Harry laughed.

'After all,' he said, 'this is a very difficult position. I can no longer go about pretending anything; I must tell people.'

'Is that absolutely necessary?'

'Quite necessary. It will be a deuce of a business, explaining.'

'Shall we tell it to one person, and let him be the town crier?'

'That, I suppose, would be the best plan; meantime, I could retire, while I made some plans for the future.'

'Perhaps, if you really must tell the truth, it would be well to go out of town for a bit.'

'As for myself,' Harry continued, 'I suppose I shall get over the wrench after a bit. Just for the moment I feel knocked out of time.'

'Keep the secret, then; let it be one between you and me, only, Harry; let no one know.'

But he shook his head.

'Everybody must know. Those who refuse to keep up the acquaintance of a private soldier's son—well, then, a non-commissioned officer's son—will probably let me know their decision, some way or other. Those who do not——' he paused.

'Nonsense, boy; who cares nowadays what a man is by birth? Is not this great city full of people who go anywhere, and are nobody's sons? Look here, and here'—he tossed half-a-dozen cards of invitation across the table—'can you tell me who these people were twenty years ago—or these—or these?'

'No: I do not care in the least who they were. I care only that they shall know who I am; I will not, for my part, pretend to be what I am not.'

'I believe you are right, boy. Let the world laugh if they please, and have done with it.'

Harry began to walk up and down the room; he certainly did not look the kind of man to give in; to try hiding things away. Quite the contrary. And he laughed—he took it laughing.

'I suppose it will sound comic at first,' he said, 'until people get used to it. Do you know what he turns out to be? That kind of thing: after all, we think too much about what people say—what does it matter what they say or how they say it? If they like to laugh, they can. Who shall be the town crier?'

'I was thinking,' said Lord Jocelyn, slowly, 'of calling to-day upon Lady Wimbledon.'

The young man laughed, with a little heightening of his colour.

'Of course—a very good person, an excellent person, and to-morrow it will be all over London. There are one or two things,' he went on after a moment, 'that I do not understand from the papers which you put into my hands last night.'

'What are those things?' Lord Jocelyn for a moment looked uneasy.

'Well—perhaps it is impertinent to ask. But—when Mr. Bunker, the respectable Uncle Bunker, traded me away, what did he get for me?'

'Every bargain has two sides,' said Lord Jocelyn. 'You know what I got, you want to know what the honourable Bunker got. Harry, on that point I must refer you to the gentleman himself.'

'Very good. Then I come to the next difficulty—a staggerer. What did you do it for? One moment, sir—' for Lord Jocelyn seemed about to reply. 'One moment. You were rich, you were well born, you were young. What on earth made you pick a boy out of the gutter and bring him up like a gentleman?'

'You are twenty-three, Harry, and yet you ask for motives. My dear boy, have you not learned the golden rule? In all human actions look for the basest motive, and attribute that. If you see any reason for stopping short of quite the lowest spurs to action, such as revenge, hatred, malice, and envy, suppose the next lowest, and you will be quite safe. That next lowest is—*son altesse, ma vanité.*'

'Oh!' replied Harry, 'yet I fail to see how a child of the lowest classes could supply any satisfaction for even the next lowest of human motives.'

'It was partly in this way. Mind, I do not for one moment pretend to answer the whole of your question. Men's motives, thank heaven, are so mixed up, that no one can be quite a saint, while no one is altogether a sinner. Nature is a leveller, which is a comfort to us who are born in levelling times. In those days I was by way of being a kind of Radical. Not a Radical such as those who delight mankind in these happier days. But I had Liberal leanings, and thought I had ideas. When I was a boy of twelve or so, there were the '48 theories floating about the air; some of them got into my brain and stuck there. Men used to believe that a great time was coming—perhaps I heard a whisper of it; perhaps I was endowed with a greater faculty for credulity than my neighbours, and believed in humanity. However, I do not seek to explain. It may have occurred to me—I do not say it did—but I have a kind of recollection as if it did—one day after I had seen you, then in the custody of the respectable Bunker, that it would be an instructive and a humorous thing to take a boy of the multitude and bring him up in all the culture, the tastes, the ideas of ourselves—you and me, for instance, Harry. This idea may have seized upon me, so that the more I thought of it, the better pleased I was with it. I may have pictured such a boy so taught, so brought up, with such tastes, returning to his own people. Disgust, I may have said, will make him a prophet; and such a prophet as the world has never yet seen. He would be like a follower of the Old Man of the Mountain. He would never cease to dream of the paradise he had seen: he would never cease to tell of it; he would be always leading his friends upward to the same levels on which he had once stood.'

'Humph!' said Harry.

'Yes, I know,' Lord Jocelyn went on. 'I ought to have foretold that the education I prepared for you would have unfitted you for the *rôle* of prophet. I am not disappointed in you, Harry—quite the reverse. I now see that what has happened has been only what I should have expected. By some remarkable accident, you possess an appearance such as is generally believed to belong to persons of long-continued gentle descent. By a still more remarkable accident, all your tastes prove to be those of the cultured classes; the blood of the Gosletts and the Bunkers has, in yourself, assumed the most azure hue.'

'That is very odd,' said Harry.

'It is a very remarkable thing, indeed,' continued Lord Jocelyn gravely. 'I have never ceased to wonder at this phenomenon. However, I was unable to send you to a public school on account of the necessity, as I thought, of concealing your parentage. But I gave you instruction of the best, and found for you companions—as you know, among the——'

'Yes,' said Harry. 'My companions were gentlemen, I suppose; I learned from them.'

'Perhaps. Still, the earthenware pot cannot become a brass pot, whatever he may pretend. You were good metal from the beginning.

'You are now, Harry,' he went on, 'three-and-twenty. You are master of three foreign languages; you have travelled on the Continent and in America; you are a good rider, a good shot, a good fencer, a good dancer. You can paint a little, fiddle a little, dance a great deal, act pretty well, speak pretty well; you can, I dare say, make love as becomes a gentleman; you can write very fair verses; you are good-looking; you have the *air noble*; you are not a prig; you are not an æsthete; you possess your share of common sense.'

'One thing you have omitted which, at the present juncture, may be more useful than any of these things.'

'What is that?'

'You were good enough to give me a lathe, and to have me instructed in the mysteries of turning. I am a practical cabinet-maker, if need be.'

'But why should this be of use to you?'

'Because, Lord Jocelyn'—Harry ran and leaned over the table with a sweet smile of determination on his face—'because I am going back to my own people for a while, and it may be that the trade of cabinet-making may prove a very backbone of strength to me among them ——'

'Harry—you would not—indeed, you could not go back to Bunker?' Lord Jocelyn asked this question with every outward appearance of genuine alarm.

'I certainly would. My very kind guardian and patron, would you stand in my way? I want to see those people from where I am sprung: I want to learn how they differ from you and your kin. I must compare myself with them—I must prove the brotherhood of humanity.'

'You will go? Yes—I see you will—it is in your eyes. Go then, Harry. But return to me soon. The slender fortune of a younger son shall be shared with you so long as I live, and given to you when I die. Do not stay among them. There are, indeed—at least, I suppose so,—all sorts and conditions of men. But to me, and to men brought up like you and me, I do not understand how there can be any but one sort and one condition. Come back soon, boy. Believe me—no—do not believe me—prove it yourself; in the social pyramid, the greatest happiness, Harry, lies near the top.'

CHAPTER I.

NEWS FOR HIS LORDSHIP.

'I HAVE news for your lordship,' said Mrs. Bormalack, at the breakfast table, 'something that will cheer you up a bit. We are to have an addition to our family.'

His lordship nodded his head, meaning that he would receive her news without more delay than was necessary, but that at present his mind was wholly occupied with a contest between one of his teeth and a crust. The tooth was an outlying one, all its lovely companions having withered and gone, and it was undefended; the crust was unyielding. For the moment no one could tell what might be the result.

Her ladyship replied for him.

Lady Davenant was a small woman, if you go by inches; her exalted rank gave her, however, a dignity designed for very much larger persons; yet she carried it with ease. She was by no means young, and her hair was thin as well as grey; her face, which was oval and delicately curved, might formerly have been beautiful;

the eyes were bright and eager, and constantly in motion, as is often the case with restless and nervous persons; her lips were thin and as full of independent action as her eyes; she had thin hands, so small that they might have belonged to a child of eight; and she might boast, when inclined for vaunting, the narrowest and most sloping shoulders that ever were seen, so sloping that people unaccustomed to her were wont to tremble lest the whole of her dress should suddenly slide straight down those shoulders, as down a slope of ice; and strange ladies, impelled by this apprehension, had been known to ask her in a friendly whisper if she could thoroughly depend upon the pins at her throat. As Mrs. Bormalack often said, speaking of her noble boarders among her friends, those shoulders of her ladyship were Quite a Feature. Next to the pride of having at her table such guests—who, however, did not give in to the good old English custom of paying double prices for having a title—was the distinction of pointing to those unique shoulders and of talking about them.

Her ladyship had a shrill, reedy voice, and spoke loudly. It was remarked by the most superficial observer, moreover, that she possessed a very strong American accent.

'At our first boarding-house,' she said, replying indirectly to the landlady's remark, 'at our first boarding-house, which was in Wellclose Square, next to the Board Schools, there was a man who once *actually* slapped his lordship on the back. And then he laughed! To be sure, he was only a Dane, but the disrespect was just the same.'

'My dear,' said his lordship, who now spoke, having compromised matters with the crust, 'the ignominy of being slapped on the back by a powerful sea captain is hardly to be weighed in comparison with the physical pain it causes.'

'We are quite sure, however, Mrs. Bormalack,' the lady went on, 'that you will admit none under your roof but those prepared to respect rank; we want no levellers or mischievous Radicals for our companions.'

'It is to be a young lady,' said Mrs. Bormalack.

'Young ladies, at all events, do not slap gentlemen on the back, whether they are noblemen or not,' said his lordship, kindly. 'We shall be happy to welcome her, ma'am.'

This ornament of the Upper House was a big, fat man, with a face like a full moon. His features were not distinctly aristocratic; his cheeks were flabby and his nose broad; also he had a double chin. His long hair was a soft, creamy white, the kind of white which in old age follows a manhood of red hair. He sat in an arm-chair at the end of the table, with his elbows on the arms, as if he desired to get as much rest out of the chair as possible. His eyes were very soft and dreamy; his expression was that of a man who has been accustomed to live in the quieter parts of the world. He, too, spoke with a marked American accent and with slowness, as if measuring his words and appreciating himself their importance. The dignity of his manner was not wholly due to his position, but in great measure to his former profession. For his lordship had not always rejoiced in his present dignity, nor, in fact, had he been brought up to it. Persons intending to become peers of Great Britain do not, as a rule, first spend more than forty years as schoolmasters in their native town. And just as clergymen, and especially young clergymen, love to talk loud, because it makes people remember that they are in the presence of those whose wisdom demands attention, so old schoolmasters speak slowly because their words—even the lightest, which are usually pretty heavy—have got to be listened to, under penalties.

As soon, however, as he began to 'enjoy the title,' the ex-schoolmaster addressed himself with some care to the cultivation of a manner which he thought due to his position. It was certainly pompous; it was intended to be affable; it was naturally, because he was a man of a most kind disposition and an excellent heart, courteous and considerate.

'I am rejoiced, Mrs. Bormalack,' he went on grandly, and with a bow, 'that we are to be cheered in our domestic circle by the addition of a young lady. It is an additional proof, if any were needed, of the care with which you consider the happiness of your guests.' The Professor, who owed for five weeks, murmured that no one felt it more than himself. 'Sometimes, ma'am, I own that even with the delightful society of yourself' ('oh, my lord, your lordship is too kind,' said Mrs. Bormalack) 'and of the accomplished Professor,'—here he bowed to the Professor, who nodded and spread out his hands professionally, 'and of the learned Mr. Daniel Fagg,'—here he bowed to Mr. Fagg, who took no notice at all, because he was thinking of his triangles and was gazing straight before him—'and of Mr. Josephus Coppin,'—here he bowed to Josephus Coppin, who humbly inclined his head without a smile, 'and of Mr. Maliphant,'—here he bowed to Mr. Maliphant, who with a breakfast-knife was trying to make a knobly crust assume the shape of a human head, in fact, the head of Mr. Gladstone, 'and of Mr. Harry Goslett, who is not with us so much as we could desire of so sprightly a young man; and surrounded as we are by all the gaiety and dissipation and splendour of London, I sometimes suspect that we are not always so cheerful as we might be.'

'Give me,' said his wife, folding her little hands and looking round her with a warlike expression, as if inviting contradiction, 'give me Canaan City, New Hampshire, for gaiety.'

Nobody combated this position, nor did anybody reply at all, unless the pantomime of the Professor was intended for a reply by gesture, like the learned Thaumast. For, with precision and abstracted air, he rolled up a little ball of bread, about as big as a marble, placed it in the palm of his left hand, closed his fingers upon it, and then opened them, showing that the ball had vanished. Then he executed the slightest possible shrug of his shoulders, spread out his hands, and nodded to his lordship, saying, with a sweet smile,—

'Pretty thing, isn't it?'

'I hope, sir, that she will be pretty,' said his lordship, thinking of the young lady. 'To look at a pretty face is as good as a day of sunshine.'

'She is a beautiful girl,' Mrs. Bormalack replied with enthusiasm, 'and I am sure she must be as good as she is pretty; because she paid three months in advance. With a piano, too, which she will play herself. She is a dressmaker by trade, and she wants to set herself up in a genteel way. And she's got a little money, she says;' a sweet smile crossed her face as she thought that most of this little money would probably come into her own pocket.

'A dressmaker!' cried her ladyship. 'Do tell! I was in that line myself before I married. That was long before we began to enjoy the title. You don't know, ma'am'—here she dropped her voice—'you don't know how remarkably fond his lordship is of a pretty face; choice with them, too. Not every face pleases him. Oh! you wouldn't believe how particular. Which shows his aristocratic descent; because we all know what his ancestors were.'

'To be sure,' said the landlady, nodding significantly. 'We all know what they were. Rovers to a man—I mean a lord. And as for the young lady, she will be here this evening, in time for tea. Shrimps and Sally Lunn, my lord. And her name is Miss Kennedy. Respectable, if poor; and illustrious ancestors is more than we can all of us have, nor yet deserve.'

Here the Professor rose, having finished his breakfast. One might have noticed that he had extremely long and delicate fingers, and that they seemed always in movement; also that he had a way of looking at you as if he meant you to look straight and steady into his eyes, and not to go rolling your eyes about in the frivolous, irresponsible way affected by some people. He walked slowly to the window; then, as if seized with an irresistible impulse to express his feelings in pantomime, or else it may be, to try an experiment, returned to the table, and asked for the loan of his lordship's pocket-handkerchief, which was a large red silk one, well fitted for the purpose. How he conveyed a saucer unseen from the table into that handkerchief, and how that saucer got into the nobleman's coat-tail pocket, were things known only to himself. Yet familiarity breeds contempt, and though everybody looked on, nobody expressed delight or astonishment, for this exhibition of magic and spells went on every day, and whenever the Professor was among them. He moved about accompanied, so to speak, by a legion of invisible attendants and servants, who conveyed, hid, brought back, uncovered, discovered, recovered, lost, found, rapped, groaned, cried, whistled, sang, moved chairs and tables, and, in fact, behaved as only a troop of well-drilled elves can behave. He was a young man of twenty-five, and he had a great gift of silence. By trade he was a Professor of legerdemain. Other Professors there are who hold up the light of this science, and hand it down to posterity undimmed; but none with such an ardent love for their work as Professor Climo. For he practised all day long, except when he was reading the feats of the illustrious conjurers, sorcerers, necromancers, and wizards of old time, or inventing new combinations, traps for the credulous, and contrivances to make that which was not seen like unto that which was. The East End of London is not the richest field for such performers; but he was young, and he lived in hope—very often, when there were no engagements, upon it. At such times he became a simple lodger, instead of a boarder, at Mrs. Bormalack's, and went without any meals.

The situation of this boarding-house, poetically described by his lordship as in the midst of the gaiety of London, was in the far East, in that region of London which is less known to Englishmen than if it were situated in the wildest part of Colorado, or among the pine forests of British Columbia. It stood, in fact, upon Stepney Green, a small strip of Eden which has been visited by few, indeed, of those who do not live in its immediate vicinity. Yet, it is a romantic spot.

Two millions of people, or thereabouts, live in the East End of London. That seems a good-sized population for an utterly unknown town. They have no institutions of their own to speak of, no public buildings of any importance, no municipality, no gentry, no carriages, no soldiers, no picture-galleries, no theatres, no opera—they have nothing. It is the fashion to believe that they are all paupers, which is a foolish and mischievous belief, as we shall presently see. Probably there is no such spectacle in the whole world as that of this immense, neglected, forgotten great city of East London. It is even neglected by its own citizens, who have never yet perceived their abandoned condition. They are Londoners, it is true, but they have no part or share of London; its wealth, its splendours, its honours exist not for them. They see nothing of any splendours; even the Lord Mayor's show goeth westward: the city lies between them and the greatness of England. They are beyond the wards, and cannot become aldermen; the rich London merchants go north and south and west; but they go not east. Nobody goes east, no one wants to see the place; no one is curious about the way of life in the east. Books on London pass it over; it has little or no history; great men are not buried in its churchyards, which are not even ancient, and crowded by citizens as obscure as those who now breathe the upper airs about them. If anything happens in the east, people at the other end have to stop and think before they can remember where the place may be.

The house was old, built of red bricks with a 'shell' decoration over the door. It contained room for about eight boarders, who had one sitting-room in common. This was the breakfast-room, a meal at which all were present; the dining-room—but nobody except his lordship and his wife dined at home; the tea-room—but tea was too early for most of the boarders; and the supper-room. After supper tobacco was tolerated. The boarders were generally men, and mostly elderly men of staid and quiet manners, with whom the evening pipe was the conclusion and solace of the day. It was not like the perpetual incense of a tap-room, and yet the smell of tobacco was never absent from the room, lingering about the folds of the dingy curtain, which served for both summer and winter, clinging to the horsehair sofa, to the leather of the chairs, and to the rusty table-cloth.

The furniture was old and mean. The wall-paper had once been crimson, but was now only dark; the ceiling had for many years wanted whitewashing badly; the door and windows wanted painting; the windows always wanted cleaning; the rope of one of the blinds was broken; and the blind itself, not nearly so white as it might have been, was pinned half-way up. Everything was shabby; everything wanted polishing, washing, brightening up.

A couple of arm-chairs stood, when meals were not going on, one on either side of the fireplace—one being reserved for his lordship, and the other for his wife; they were, like the sofa, of horsehair, and slippery. There was a long table covered by a faded red cloth; the carpet was a Brussels, once of a warm crimson, now worn threadbare; the hearthrug was worn into holes; one or two of the chairs had broken out and showed glimpses of stuffing. The sideboard was of old-fashioned build, and a shiny black by reason of its age; there were two or three hanging shelves filled with books, the property of his lordship, who loved reading; the mantel-shelf was decorated by a small collection of pipes; and above it hung a portrait of the late Samuel Bormalack, formerly a Collector in the great Brewing House of Messenger, Marsden, and Company.

His widow, who carried on the house, was a comfortable—a serenely comfortable woman, who regarded the world from the optimist's point of view. Perfect health and a tolerably prosperous business, where the returns are regular though the profits are small, make the possessor agree with Pope and Candide that everything is for the best in this best of all possible worlds. Impossible not to be contented, happy, and religious, when your wishes are narrowed to a tidy dinner, a comfortable supper with a little something hot, boarders who pay up regular, do not grumble, and go to bed sober; and a steady hope that you will not 'get something,' by which of course is meant that you may not fall ill of any disagreeable or painful disease. To 'get something' is one of the pretty euphemisms of our daily speech.

She had had one or two unlucky accidents, such as the case of Captain Saffrey, who stayed two months, and drank enough beer to float a three-decker, and then sailed away, promising to pay, and would have done so—for he was an honest man—but had the misfortune to fall overboard while in liquor. But her present boarders seemed most respectable, and she was at ease.

Of course, the persons of greatest consideration among them were the noble pair who enjoyed the title. Rank is respected, if you please, even at the East End of London, and perhaps more there than in fashionable quarters, because it is so rare. King John, it is true, had once a palace at Stepney; but that is a long time to look back upon, and even the oldest inhabitant can now not remember to have been kicked by the choleric monarch. Then the Marquis of Worcester had once a great house here, what time the sainted Charles was ripening things for a row Royal. That house is gone too, and I do not know where it used to stand. From the time of this East End Marquis to the arrival of Lord and Lady Davenant, last year, there have been no resident members of the English aristocracy, and no member of the foreign nobility, with the exception of a certain dusky Marquis of Choufleur, from Hayti, who is reported on good authority to have once lived in these parts for six months, thinking he was in the politest and most fashionable suburb of London. He is further said to have carried on with Satanic wildness in Limehouse and the West India Dock Road of an evening. A Japanese, too, certainly once went to an hotel in America Square, which is not quite the East End, and said he was a Prince in his own country. He stayed a week, and drank champagne all day long. Then he decamped without paying the bill; and when the landlord went to the Embassy to complain, he thought it was the Ambassador himself, until he discovered that all Japanese are exactly alike. Wherefore he desisted from any further attempt to identify the missing Prince for want of the missing link, namely, some distinctive feature.

The illustrious pair had now been in the House for six weeks. Previously they had spent some time in Wellclose Square, which is no doubt well known to fashionable readers, and lies contiguous to St. George's Street. Here happened that accident of the back-slapping so feelingly alluded to by her ladyship. They were come from America to take up an old family title which had been in abeyance for two or three generations. They appeared to be poor, but able to find the modest weekly sum asked by Mrs. Bormalack; and in order to secure her confidence and goodwill, they paid every week in advance. They drank nothing but water, but, to make up, his lordship ate a great deal, especially at breakfast, and they asked for strange things, unknown to English households. In other respects they gave no kind of trouble, were easily satisfied, never grumbled, and were affable. For their rank they certainly dressed shabbily, but high social station is sometimes found coupled with eccentricity. Doubtless Lord Davenant had his reasons for going about in a coat white at the seams and shiny at the back, which, being made of sympathetic stuff, and from long habit, had assumed the exact shape of his noble back and shoulders, with a beautiful model of his illustrious elbows. For similarly good and sufficient reasons Lady Davenant wore that old black gown and those mended gloves and——; but it is cruel to enumerate the shortcomings of her attire.

Perhaps on account of his public character, the Professor would rank in the House after his lordship. Nothing confers greatness more quickly than an unabashed appearance upon a platform. Mr. Maliphant, however, who had travelled and could relate tales of adventure, might dispute precedence with him. He was now a carver of figure-heads for ships. It is an old and honourable trade, but in these latter days it has decayed. He had a small yard at Limehouse, where he worked all by himself, turning out heads in the rough, so that they might be transformed into the beauteous goddess Venus, or a Saucy Poll, or a bearded Neptune, as the owners might prefer. He was now an old man, with a crumpled and million-lined face, but active still and talkative. His memory played him tricks, and he took little interest in new things. He had a habit, too, which disconcerted people unaccustomed to him, of thinking one part of a reminiscence to himself and saying the rest aloud, so that one got only the torso or mangled trunk of the story, or the head, or the feet, with or without the tail, which is the point.

The learned Daniel Fagg, rapt always in contemplation, was among them but not of them. He was lately arrived from Australia, bringing with him a Discovery which took away the breath of those who heard it, and filled all the scholars and learned men of Europe with envy and hatred, so that they combined and formed a general conspiracy to keep him down, and to prevent the publication of his great book, lest the world should point the finger of scorn at them, and laugh at the blindness of its great ones. Daniel himself said so, and an oppressed man generally knows his oppressor. He went away every morning after breakfast, and returned for tea. He was believed to occupy the day in spreading a knowledge of his Discovery, the nature of which was unknown at the boarding-house, among clergymen and other scholars. In the evening he sat over a Hebrew Bible and a dictionary, and spoke to no one. A harmless man, but soured and disappointed with the cold reception of his Great Discovery.

Another boarder was the unfortunate Josephus Coppin, who was a clerk in the great brewing-house of Messenger, Marsden, and Company. He had been there for forty years, being now fifty-five years of age, grey, and sad of face, because, for a certain well-known reason, he was not advanced, but remained for ever among the juniors at a salary of thirty shillings a week. Other men of his own standing were Chief Brewers, Collectors, and Chief Accountants. He was almost where he had started. The young men came and mounted the ladder of promotion, passing him one after the other; he alone remained upon the rung which he had reached one day, now thirty years bygone, when a certain thing happened, the consequences of which were to keep him down, to ruin his prospects, to humiliate and degrade him, to sadden and embitter his whole life. Lastly, there was a young man, the only young man among them, one Harry Goslett by name, who had quite recently joined the boarding-house. He was a nephew of Mr. Coppin, and was supposed to be looking for a place of business.

But he was an uncertain boarder. He paid for his dinner, but never dined at home; he had brought with him a lathe, which he set up in a little garden-house, and here he worked by himself, but in a fitful, lazy way, as if it mattered nothing whether he worked or not. He seemed to prefer strolling about the place, looking around him as if he had never seen things before, and he was wont to speak of familiar objects as if they were strange and rare. These eccentricities were regarded as due to his having been to America. A handsome young man and cheerful, which made it a greater pity that he was so idle.

On this morning the first to start for the day's business was Daniel Fagg. He put his Hebrew Bible on the bookshelf, took out a memorandum-book and the stump of a pencil, made an entry, and then counted out his money, which amounted to eight-and-sixpence, with a sigh. He was a little man, about sixty years of age, and his thin hair was sandy in colour. His face was thin, and he looked hungry and under-fed. I believe, in fact, that he seldom had money enough for dinner, and so went without. Nothing was remarkable in his face, except a pair of very large and thick eyebrows, also of sandy hue, which is unusual, and produces a very curious effect. With these he was wont to frown tremendously as he went along, frightening the little children into fits; when he was not frowning, he looked dejected. It must have been an unhappy condition of things which made the poor man thus alternate between wrath and depression. There were, however, moments—those when he got hold of a new listener—in which he would light up with enthusiasm as he detailed the history of his Discovery. Then the thin, drawn cheek would fill out, and his quivering lips would become firm, and his dejected eyes would brighten with the old pride of discovery, and he would laugh once more, and rub his hands with pride, when he described the honest sympathy of the people in the Australian township, where he first announced the great Revelation he was to make to the world, and received their enthusiastic cheers and shouts of encouragement.

Harry Goslett was his last listener, and, as the enthusiast thought, his latest convert.

As Daniel passed out of the dining-room, and was looking for his hat among a collection of hats as bad as was ever seen out of Canadian backwoods, Harry Goslett himself came downstairs, his hands in his pockets, as slowly and lazily as if there was no such thing as work to do or time to keep. He laughed and nodded to the discoverer.

'Oho! Dan'l,' he said; 'how are the triangles? and are you really going back to the Lion's Den?'

'Yes, Mr. Goslett, I am going back there! I am not afraid of them; I am going to see the Head of the Egyptian Department. He says he will give me a hearing; they all said they would, and they have. But they won't listen; it's no use to hear unless you listen. What a dreadful thing is jealousy among the learned, Mr. Goslett!'

'It is indeed, my Prophet; have they subscribed to the book?'

'No! they won't subscribe. Is it likely that they will help to bring out a work which proves them all wrong? Come, sir, even at your age you can't think so well of poor humanity.'

'Daniel—' the young man laid his hands impressively upon the little man's shoulders—'you showed me yesterday a list of forty-five subscribers to your book, at twelve shillings and sixpence apiece. *Where is that subscription-money?*'

The poor man blushed, and hung his head.

'A man must live,' he said at length, trying to frown fiercely.

'Yes, but unpleasant notice is sometimes taken of the way in which people live, my dear friend. This is not a free country; not by any means free. If I were you, I would take the triangles back to Australia, and print the book there, among your friends.'

'No!' The little man stamped on the ground, and rammed his head into his hat with determination. 'No, Mr. Goslett, and no again. It shall be printed here. I will hurl it at the head of the so-called scholars here, in London—in their stronghold, close to the British Museum. Besides'—here he relaxed, and turned a pitiful face of sorrow and shame upon his adviser—'besides, can I forget the day when I left Australia? They all came aboard to say good-bye. The papers had paragraphs about it. They shouted one after the other, and nobblers went around surprising, and they slapped me on the back and said, "Go, Dan'l," or "Go, Fagg," or "Go, Mr. Fagg," according to their intimacy and the depth of their friendship—"Go where honour and glory and a great fortune, with a pension on the Queen's Civil List, are waiting for you." On the voyage I even dreamed of a title; I thought Sir Daniel Fagg, Knight or Baronet, or the Right Reverend Lord Fagg, would sound well to go back to Australia with. Honour? Glory? Fortune? where are they? Eight-and-sixpence in my pocket; and the Head of the Greek Department calls me a fool, because I won't acknowledge that truth—yes, TRUTH—is error. Laughs at the triangles, Mr. Goslett!'

He laughed bitterly and went out, slamming the door behind him.

Then Harry entered the breakfast-room, nodding pleasantly to everybody; and without any apology for lateness, as if breakfast could be kept about all the morning to suit his convenience, sat down and began to eat. Jonathan Coppin got up, sighed and went away to his brewery. The Professor looked at the last comer with a meditative air, as if he would like to make him disappear, and could do it too, but was uncertain how Harry would take it. Mrs.

Bormalack hurried away on domestic business. Mr. Maliphant laughed and rubbed his hands together, and then laughed again as if he were thinking of something really comic, and said, 'Yes, I knew the Sergeant very well, a well set-up man he was, and Caroline Coppin was a pretty girl.' At this point his face clouded and his eyes expressed doubt. 'There was,' he added, 'something I wanted to ask you, young man, something'—here he tapped his forehead—'something about your father or your mother, or both; but I have forgotten—never mind. Another time—another time.'

He ran away with boyish activity and a schoolboy's laugh, being arrived at that time of life when one becomes light of heart once more, knowing by experience that nothing matters very much. There were none left in the room but the couple who enjoyed the title.

His lordship sat in his arm-chair, apparently enjoying it, in meditation and repose; this, one perceives, is quite the best way of enjoying an hereditary title, if you come to it late in life.

His wife had, meanwhile, got out a little shabby portfolio in black leather, and was turning over the papers with impatience; now and then she looked up to see whether this late young man had finished his breakfast. She fidgeted, arranged, and worried with her papers, so that anyone, whose skull was not six inches thick, might have seen that she wanted to be alone with her husband. It was also quite clear to those who thought about things, and watched this little lady, that there may be meaning in certain proverbial expressions touching grey mares.

Presently Harry Goslett finished his coffee, and, paying no attention to her little ladyship's signals of distress, began to open up conversation on general subjects with the noble lord.

She could bear it no longer. Here were the precious moments wasted and thrown away, every one of which should be bringing them nearer to the recognition of their rights.

'Young man,' she cried, jumping up in her chair; 'if you've got nothing to do but to loll and lop around, all forenoon, I guess we hev, and this is the room in which we do our work.'

'I beg your pardon, Lady Davenant——'

'Young man—Git——'

She pointed to the door.

CHAPTER II.

A VERY COMPLETE CASE.

His lordship, left alone with his wife, manifested certain signs of uneasiness. She laid the portfolio on the table, turned over the papers, sorted some of them, picked out some for reference, fetched the ink, and placed the penholder in position.

'Now, my dear,' she said, 'no time to lose. Let us set to work in earnest.'

His lordship sighed. He was sitting with his fat hands upon his knees, contented with the repose of the moment.

'Clara Martha,' he grumbled, 'cannot I have one hour of rest?'

'Not one, till you get your rights.' She hovered over him like a little falcon, fierce and persistent. 'Not one. What? You a British peer? You, who ought to be sitting with a coronet on your head—you to shrink from the trouble of writing out your Case? And such a Case!'

He only moaned. Certainly he was a very lethargic person.

'You are not the Carpenter, your father. Nor even the Wheelwright, your grandfather, who came down of his own accord. You would rise, you would soar—you have the spirit of your ancestors.'

He feebly flapped with his elbows, as if he really would like to take a turn in the air, but made no verbal response.

'Cousin Nathaniel,' she went on, 'gave us six months at six dollars a week. That's none too generous of Nathaniel, seeing we have no children, and he will be the heir to the title. I guess Aurelia Tucker set him against the thing. Six months, and three of them gone already, and nothing done. What would Aurelia say if we went home again, beaten?'

The little woman gasped, and would have shrugged her shoulders, but they were such a long way down—shoulders so sloping could not be shrugged.

Her remonstrances moved the heavy man, who drew his chair to the table with great deliberation.

'We are here,' she continued—always the exhorter and the strengthener of faith—'not to claim a title but to assume it. We shall present our Case to Parliament, or the Queen, or the House of Lords, or the Court of Chancery, or whosoever is the right person, and we shall say, "I am Lord Davenant." That is all.'

'Clara Martha,' said her husband, 'I wish that were all we had to do. And, on the whole, I would as soon be back in Canaan City, New Hampshire, and the trouble over. The memoranda are all here,' he said. 'Can't we get someone else to draw up the Case?'

'Certainly not. You must do it. Why, you used to think nothing of writing out a Fourth of July speech.'

He shook his head.

'And you know that you have often said, yourself, that there wasn't a book written that could teach you anything up to Quadratic Equations. And self-raised, too!'

'It isn't that, Clara Martha. It isn't that. Listen!' he sank his voice to a whisper. *It's the doubt.* That's the point. Every time I face that doubt it's like a bucket of cold water down my back.'

She shivered. Yes; there was always the doubt.

'Come, my dear,' she said presently; 'we must get the Case drawn up, so that anyone may read it. That is the first thing—never think of any doubt.'

He took up one of the loose papers, which was covered with writing.

'Timothy Clitheroe Davenant,' he read with a weary sigh, 'died at Canaan City, New Hampshire, in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and ninety-four. By trade he was a Wheelwright. His marriage is recorded in the church register of July 1, 1773. His headstone still stands in the old churchyard, and says that he was born in England in the year one thousand seven hundred and thirty-two—it does not say where he was born—and that he was sixty-two years of age at the day of his death. Also, that long time he bore——'

'Yes, yes, but you needn't put that in. Go on with your Case. The next point is your own father. Courage, my dear; it is a very strong Case.'

'The Case *is* very strong.' His lordship plucked up courage, and took up another paper. 'This is my father's record. All is clear: Born in Canaan City on October 10, 1774, the year of Independence, the eldest son of the aforesaid Timothy Clitheroe Davenant, Wheelwright, and Dinah his wife—here is a copy of the register. Married on May 13, 1810, which was late in life, because he didn't somehow get on so fast as some, to Susanna Pegley, of the same parish. Described as a Carpenter—but a poor workman, Clara Martha, and fond of chopping yarns, in which he was equalled by none. He died in the year 1830, his tombstone still standing, like his father's before him. It says that his end was peace. Wal—he always wanted it. Give him peace, with a chair in the verandah, and a penknife and a little bit of pine, and he asked for no more. Only that, and his wife wouldn't let him have it. His end was peace.'

'You all want peace,' said his wife. 'The Davenants always did think that they only had to sit still and the plums would drop in their mouths. As for you, I believe you'd be content to sit and sit in Canaan City till Queen Victoria found you out and sent you the coronet herself. But you've got a wife as well as your father.'

'I hev,' he said, with another sigh. 'Perhaps we were wrong to come over—I think I was happier in the schoolroom, when the boys were gone hum. It was very quiet, there, for a sleep in the afternoon by the stove. And in summer the trees looked harnsome in the sunlight.'

She shook her head impatiently.

'Come,' she cried. 'Where are the "Recollections" of your grandfather?'

He found another paper, and read it slowly,

'My grandfather died before I was born. My father, however, said that he used to throw out hints about his illustrious family, and that if he chose to go back to England some people would be very much surprised. But he never explained himself. Also he would sometimes speak of a great English estate, and once he said that the freedom of a Wheelwright was better than the gilded chains of a British aristocrat—that was at a Fourth of July Meetin'.'

'Men talk wild at meetin's,' said his wife. 'Still, there may have been a meanin' behind it. Go on, Timothy—I mean, my lord.'

'As for my father, it pleased him, when he could put up his feet and crack with his friends, to brag of his great connections in England. But he never knew rightly who they were, and he was too peaceful and restful a creature to take steps to find out.'

'Waitin' for King George,' observed his wife. 'Just what you would be doin', but for me.'

'That's all the "Recollections." Here comes my own declaration:

'"I, Timothy Clitheroe Davenant, make affidavit on oath, if necessary—but I am not quite clear as to the righteousness of swearing—that I am the son of the late Timothy Clitheroe Davenant, sometime carpenter of the City of Canaan, New Hampshire, U.S.A., and Susanna his wife, both now deceased; that I was born in the year of grace one thousand eight hundred and fifteen, and that I have been for forty years a teacher in my native town." That is all clean and above-board, Clara Martha; no weak point so far, father to son, marriage certificates regularly found, and baptism registers. No one can ask more. "Further, I, the above-named Timothy, do claim to be the lawful and legitimate heir to the ancient barony of Davenant, supposed to be extinct in the year 1783 by the death of the last lord, without male issue." Legally worded, I think,' he added with a little proud smile.

'Yes; it reads right. Now for the connection.'

'Oh! the connection.' His lordship's face clouded over. His consort, however, awaited the explanation, for the thousandth time, in confidence. Where the masculine mind found doubt and uncertainty, the quick woman's intellect, ready to believe and tenacious of faith, had jumped to certainty.

'The connection is this.' He took up another paper, and read:

'"The last Lord Davenant had one son only, a boy named Timothy Clitheroe. All the eldest sons of the House were named Timothy Clitheroe, just as all the Ashleys are named Anthony. When the boy arrived at years of maturity he was sent on the Grand Tour, which he made with a tutor. On returning to England, it is believed that he had some difference with his father, the nature of which has never been ascertained. He then embarked upon a ship sailing for the American Colonies. Nothing more was ever heard about him, no news came to his father or his friends, and he was supposed to be dead."'

'Even the ship was never heard of,' added her ladyship, as if this was a fact which would greatly help in lengthening the life of the young man.

'That, too, was never heard of again. If she had not been thrown away, we might have learned what became of the Honourable Timothy Clitheroe Davenant.' There was some confusion of ideas here, which the ex-schoolmaster was not slow to perceive.

'I mean,' he tried to explain, 'that if she got safe to Boston, the young man would have landed there, and all would be comparatively clear. Whereas, if she was cast away, we must now suppose that he was saved and got ashore somehow.'

'Like Saint Paul,' she cried triumphantly, 'on a piece of wreck. What St. Paul did, he could do, I should hope.'

'Because,' her husband continued, 'there is one fact which proves that he *did* get ashore, that he concluded to stay there, that he descended so far into the social scale as to become a wheelwright; and that he lived and died in the town of Canaan, New Hampshire.'

'Go on, my dear. Make it clear. Put it strong. This is the most interesting point of all.'

'And this young man, who was supposed to be cast away in the year one thousand seven hundred and fifty-four, aged twenty-two, was exactly the same age as my grandfather, Timothy Clitheroe Davenant, who *bore the same name*, which is proved by the headstone and the church books.'

'Could there,' asked his wife, springing to her feet, 'could there have been two Englishmen——?'

'Of the same illustrious and historic surname, both in America?' replied her husband, roused into a flabby enthusiasm.

'Of the same beautiful Christian name?—two Timothys?'

'Born both in the same year?'

The little woman with the bright eyes and the sloping shoulders threw her arms about her husband's neck.

'You *shall* have your rights, my dear,' she said; 'I will live to see you sitting in the House of Lords with the hereditary statesmen of England. If there is justice in the land of England, you shall have your rights. There is justice, I am sure, and equal law for poor and rich, and encouragements for the virtuous. Yes, my dear, the virtuous. Whatever your faults may be, your virtues are many, and it can't but do the House of Lords good to see a little virtue among them. Not that I hold with Aurelia Tucker that the English House of Lords are wallowers in sin; whereas, Irene Pascoe once met a Knight on a missionary platform and found he'd got religion. But virtue you can never have too much of. Courage, my lord; forget the Carpenter, and think only of the Nobleman, your grandfather, who condescended to become a Wheelwright.'

He obediently took up the pen and began. When he seemed fairly absorbed in the task of copying out and stating the Case, she left him. As soon as the door was closed, he heaved a gentle sigh, pushed back his chair, put up his feet upon another chair, covered his head with his red silk pocket-handkerchief—for there were flies in the room—and dropped into a gentle slumber. The Carpenter was, for the moment, above the condescending Wheelwright.

CHAPTER III.

ONLY A DRESSMAKER.

HARRY GOSLETT returned to the boarding-house that evening, in a mood of profound dejection; he had spent a few hours with certain cousins, whose acquaintance he was endeavouring to make. 'Hitherto,' he said, writing to Lord Jocelyn, 'the soil seems hardly worth cultivating.' In this he spoke hastily, because every man's mind is worth cultivating as soon as you find out the things best fitted to grow in it. But some minds will only grow turnips, while others produce the finest strawberries.

The cousins, for their part, did not, as yet, take to the new arrival, whom they found difficult to understand—his speech was strange, his manner stranger: these peculiarities, they thought in their ignorance, were due to residence in the United States, where Harry had found it expedient to place most of his previous years. Conversation was difficult between two rather jealous workmen and a brother artisan who greatly resembled the typical Swell—an object of profound dislike and suspicion to the working classes.

He had now spent some three weeks among his kinsfolk. He brought with him some curiosity, but little enthusiasm. At first he was interested and amused; rapidly he became bored and disgusted; for as yet he saw only the outside of things. There was an uncle, Mr. Benjamin Bunker, the study of whom, regarded as anybody else's uncle, would have been pleasant. Considered as his own connection by marriage—Benjamin and the late Sergeant Goslett having married sisters—he was too much inclined to be ashamed of him. The two cousins seemed to him—as yet he knew them very little—a pair of sulky, ill-bred young men, who had taken two opposite lines, neither of which was good for social intercourse. The people of the boarding-house continued to amuse him, partly because they were in a way afraid of him. As for the place—he looked about him, standing at the north entrance of Stepney Green—on the left hand, the Whitechapel Road; behind him, Stepney, Limehouse, St. George's-in-the-East, Poplar, and Shadwell; on the right, the Mile End Road, leading to Bow and Stratford; before him, Ford, Hackney, Bethnal Green. Mile upon mile of streets with houses—small, mean, and monotonous houses; the people living the same mean and monotonous lives, all after the same model. In his ignorance he pitied and despised those people, not knowing how rich and full any life may be made, whatever the surroundings, and even without the gracious influences of Art. Under the influence of this pity and contempt, when he returned in the evening at half-past nine, he felt himself for the first time in his life run very low down indeed.

The aspect of the room was not calculated to cheer him up. It was lit with a mean two-jet gas-burner; the dingy curtain wanted looping up, the furniture looked more common and mean than usual. Yet, as he stood in the doorway, he became conscious of a change.

The boarders were all sitting there, just as usual, and the supper cloth was removed; Mr. Maliphant had his long pipe fixed in the corner of his mouth, but he held it there with an appearance of constraint, and he had let it go out. Mr. Josephus Coppin sat in the corner in which he always put himself, so as to be out of everybody's way; also with a pipe in his hand, unlighted. Daniel Fagg had his Hebrew Bible spread out before him, and his Dictionary, and his copy of the Authorised Version—which he used, as he would carefully explain, not for what schoolboys call a crib, but for purpose of comparison. This was very grand! A man who can read Hebrew at all inspires one with confidence; but the fact is the more important when it is connected with a discovery; and to compare Versions—one's own with the collected wisdom of a Royal Commission—is a very grand thing indeed. But to-night he sat with his head in his hands, and his sandy hair pushed back, looking straight before him; and Mrs. Bormalack was graced in her best black silk dress, and 'the decanters' were proudly placed upon the table with rum, gin, and brandy in them, and beside them stood the tumblers, hot water, cold water, lemons, and spoons, in the most genteel way. The representative of the Upper House, who did not take spirits and water, sat calmly dignified in his arm-chair by the fireplace, and in front of him, on the other side, sat his wife, with black thread mittens drawn tightly over her little hands and thin arms, bolt upright, and conscious of her rank. All appeared to be silent, but that was their custom, and all, which was not their custom, wore an unaccustomed air of company manners which was very beautiful to see.

Harry, looking about him, perplexed at these phenomena, presently observed that the eyes of all, except those of Daniel Fagg, were fixed in one direction; and that the reason why Mr. Maliphant held an unlighted pipe in his mouth, and Josephus one in his hand, and that Daniel was not reading, and that his lordship looked so full of dignity, and that ardent spirits were abroad, was nothing less than the presence of a young lady.

In such a house, and, in fact, all round Stepney Green, the word 'lady' is generally used in a broad and catholic spirit; but in this case Harry unconsciously used it in the narrow, prejudiced, one-sided sense peculiar to Western longitudes. And it was so surprising to think of a young lady in connection with Bormalack's, that he gasped and caught his breath. And then Mrs. Bormalack presented him to the new arrival in her best manner. 'Our youngest! ' she said, as if he had been a son of the house—'our youngest and last—the sprightly Mr. Goslett. This is Miss Kennedy, and I hope—I'm sure—that you two will get to be friendly with one another, not to speak of keeping company, which is early days yet for prophecies.'

Harry bowed in his most superior style. What on earth, he thought again, did a young lady want at Stepney Green?

She had the carriage and the manner of a lady; she was quite simply dressed in a black cashmere; she wore a red ribbon round her white throat, and had white cuffs. A lady—unmistakably a lady; also young and beautiful, with great brown eyes, which met his own frankly, and with a certain look of surprise which seemed an answer to his own.

'Our handsome young cabinet-maker, Miss Kennedy,' went on the landlady—Harry wondered whether it was worse to be described as sprightly than as handsome, and which adjective was likely to produce the more unfavourable impression on a young lady—'is wishful to establish himself in a genteel way of business like yourself.'

'When I was in the dressmaking line,' observed her ladyship 'I stayed at home with mother and Aunt Keziah. It was not thought right in Canaan City for young women to go about setting up shops by themselves. Not that I say you are wrong, Miss Kennedy, but London ways are not New Hampshire ways.'

Miss Kennedy murmured something softly, and looked again at the handsome cabinet-maker, who was still blushing with indignation and shame at Mrs. Bormalack's adjectives, and ready to blush again on recovery to think that he was so absurd as to feel any shame about so trifling a matter. Still, every young man likes to appear in a good light in the presence of beauty.

The young lady, then, was only a dressmaker. For the moment she dropped a little in his esteem, which comes of our artificial and conventional education; because—Why not a dressmaker? Then she rose again, because—WHAT a dressmaker! Could there be many such in Stepney? If so, how was it that poets, novelists, painters, and idle young men did not flock to so richly endowed a district? In this unexpected manner does nature offer compensations. Harry also observed with satisfaction the novel presence of a newly-arrived piano, which could belong to no other than the new-comer; and finding that the conversation showed no signs of brightening, he ventured to ask Miss Kennedy if she would play to them.

Now, when she began to play, a certain magic of the music fell upon them all, affecting everyone differently. Such is the power of music, and thus diverse is it in its operation. As for his lordship, he sat nodding his head and twinkling his eyes and smiling sweetly, because he was in imagination sitting among his Peers in the Upper House with a crown of gold and a robe of fur, and all his friends of Canaan City, brought across the Atlantic at his own expense for this very purpose, were watching him with envy and admiration from the gallery. Among them was Aurelia Tucker, the scoffer and thrower of cold water. And her ladyship sat beating time with head and hand, thinking how the family estates would probably be restored, with the title, by the Queen. She had great ideas on the Royal Prerogative, and had indeed been accustomed to think in the old days that Englishmen go about in continual terror lest her Majesty, in the exercise of this Prerogative, should order their heads to be removed. This gracious vision, due entirely to the music, showed her in a stately garden entertaining Aurelia Tucker and other friends whom she, like her husband, had imported from Canaan City for the purpose of exhibiting the new greatness. And Aurelia was green with envy, though she wore her best black silk dress.

The other boarders were differently affected. The melancholy Josephus leant his head upon his hand, and saw himself in imagination the Head Brewer, as he might have been, but for the misfortune of his early youth. Head Brewer to the Firm of Messenger, Marsden, and Company! What a position!

Daniel Fagg, for his part, was dreaming of the day when his Discovery was to be received by all and adequately rewarded. He anticipated the congratulations of his friends in Australia, and stood on deck in port surrounded by the crowd, who shook his hand and cheered him, in good Australian fashion, as Daniel the Great, Daniel the Scourge of Scholars, Daniel the Prophet—a second Daniel. The Professor took advantage of this general rapture or abstraction from earthly things to lay the plans for a *grand coup* in legerdemain, a new experiment, which should astonish everybody. This he afterwards carried through with success.

Mrs. Bormalack, for her part, filled and slowly drank a large tumbler of hot brandy-and-water. When she had finished it she wiped away a tear. Probably, stimulated by the brandy, which is a sentimental spirit, she was thinking of her late husband, Collector for the Brewery, who was himself romantically fond of brandy-and-water, and came to an early end in consequence of over-rating his powers of consumption.

Mr. Maliphant winked his eyes, rolled his head, rubbed his hands, and laughed joyously, but in silence. Why, one knows not. When the music finished, he whispered to Daniel Fagg. 'No,' he said, 'this is the third time in the year that you have asked leave to bury your mother. Make it your grandmother, young man.' Then he laughed again, and said that he had been with Walker in Nicaragua. Harry heard this communication, and the attempt to fill up the story from these two fragments afterwards gave him nightmare.

Miss Kennedy played a gavotte, and then another, and then a sonata. Perhaps it is the character of this kind of music to call up pleasant and joyous thoughts; certainly there is much music, loved greatly by some people, which makes us sad, notably the strains sung at places of popular resort. They probably become favourites because they sadden so much. Who would not shed tears on hearing 'Tommy Dodd'?

She played without music, gracefully, easily, and with expression. While she played Harry sat beside the piano, still wondering on the same theme. She, a Stepney dressmaker! Who, in this region, could have taught her that touch? She 'wishful to establish herself in a genteel way of business'? Was art, then, permeating downwards so rapidly? Were the people just above the masses, the second or third stratum of the social pyramid, taught music, and in such a style? Then he left off wondering, and fell to the blissful contemplation of a beautiful woman playing beautiful music. This is an occupation always delightful to young Englishmen, and it does equal credit to their heads and to their hearts that they never tire of so harmless an amusement. When she finished playing, everybody descended to earth, so to speak.

The noble pair remembered that their work was still before them—all to do: one of them thought, with a pang, about the drawing of the Case, and wished he had not gone to sleep in the morning.

The clerk in the Brewery awoke to the recollection of his thirty shillings a week, and reflected that the weather was such as to necessitate a pair of boots which had soles.

The learned Daniel Fagg bethought him once more of his poverty and the increasing difficulty of getting subscribers, and the undisguised contempt with which the head of the Egyptian Department had that morning received him.

Mr. Maliphant left off laughing, and shook his puckered old face with a little astonishment that he had been so moved.

Said the Professor, breaking the silence:

'I like the music to go on, so long as no patter is wanted. They listen to music if it's lively, and it prevents 'em from looking round and getting suspicious. You haven't got an egg upon you, Mrs. Bormalack, have you? Dear me, one in your lap! Actually in a lady's lap! A common egg, one of our "selected," at tenpence the dozen. Ah! In your lap, too! How very injudicious! You might have dropped it, and broken it. Perhaps, Miss, you wouldn't mind obliging once more with "Tommy, make room for your uncle," or "Over the garden wall," if you please.'

Miss Kennedy did not know either of these airs, but she laughed and said she would play something lively, while the Professor went on with his trick. First, he drew all eyes to meet his own like a fascinating constrictor, and then he began to 'palm' the egg in the most surprising manner. After many adventures it was ultimately found in Daniel Fagg's coat pocket. Then the Professor smiled, bowed, and spread out his hands as if to show the purity and honesty of his conjuring.

'You play very well,' said Harry to Miss Kennedy, when the conjuring was over and the Professor had returned to his chair and his nightly occupation with a pencil, a piece of paper, and a book.

'Can you play?'

'I fiddle a little. If you will allow me, we will try some evening a duet together.'

'I did not know——' she began, but checked herself. 'I did not expect to find a violinist here.'

'A good many people of my class play,' said Harry, mendaciously, because the English workman is the least musical of men.

'Few of mine,' she returned, rising, and closing the piano, 'have the chance of learning. But I have had opportunities.'

She looked at her watch, and remarked that it was nearly ten o'clock, and that she was going to bed.

'I have spoken to Mr. Bunker about what you want, Miss Kennedy,' said the landlady. 'He will be here to-morrow morning about ten on his rounds.'

'Who is Mr. Bunker?' asked Angela.

They all seemed surprised. Had she never, in whatever part of the world she had lived, heard of Mr. Bunker—Bunker the Great?

'He used to be a sort of a factotum to old Mr. Messenger,' said Mrs. Bormalack. 'His death was a sad blow to Mr. Bunker. He's a general agent by trade, and he deals in coal, and he's a house agent, and he knows everybody round Stepney and up the Mile End Road as far as Bow. He's saved money, too, Miss Kennedy, and is greatly respected.'

'He ought to be,' said Harry; 'not only because he was so much with Mr. Messenger, whose name is revered for the kindred associations of beer and property, but also because he is my uncle—he ought to be respected.'

'Your uncle?'

'My own—so near, and yet so dear—my uncle Bunker. To be connected with Messenger, Marsden, and Company, even indirectly, through such an uncle, is in itself a distinction. You will learn to know him, and you will learn to esteem him, Miss Kennedy. You will esteem him all the more if you are interested in beer.'

Miss Kennedy blushed.

'Bunker is great in the Company. I believe he used to consider himself a kind of partner while the old man lived. He knows all about the big Brewery. As for that, everybody does round Stepney Green.'

'The Company,' said Josephus, gloomily, 'is nothing but a chit of a girl.' He sighed, thinking how much went to her, and how little came to himself.

'We are steeped in beer,' Harry went on. 'Our conversation turns for ever on beer; we live for beer; the houses round us are filled with the Company's servants; we live *by* beer. For example, Mrs. Bormalack's late husband——'

'He was a Collector for the Company,' said the landlady, with natural pride.

'You see, Miss Kennedy, what a responsible and exalted position was held by Mr. Bormalack.' (The widow thought that sometimes it was hard to know whether this sprightly young man was laughing at people or not, but it certainly was a very high position, and most respectable.) 'He went round the Houses,' Harry went on. 'Houses, here, mean public-houses; the Company owns half the public-houses in the East End. Then here is my cousin, the genial Josephus. Hold up your head, Josephus. He, for his part, is a clerk in the House.'

Josephus groaned. 'A junior clerk,' he murmured.

'The Professor is not allowed in the Brewery. He might conjure among the vats, and vats have never been able to take a practical joke; but he amuses the Brewery people. As for Mr. Maliphant, he carves figure-heads for the ships which carry away the Brewery beer; and perhaps when the Brewery wants cabinets made they will come to me.'

'It is the biggest Brewery in all England,' said the landlady. 'I can never remember—because my memory is like a sieve—how much beer they brew every year; but somebody once made a calculation about it, compared with Niagara Falls, which even Mr. Bunker said was surprising.'

'Think, Miss Kennedy,' said Harry, 'of an Entire Niagara of Messenger's Entire.'

'But how can this Mr. Bunker be of use to me?' asked the young lady.

'Why!' said Mrs. Bormalack. 'There is not a shop nor a street nor any kind of place within miles Mr. Bunker doesn't know, who they are that lived there, how they make their living, what the rent is, and everything. That's what made him so useful to old Mr. Messenger.'

Miss Kennedy, for some reason, changed colour. Then she said that she thought she would like to see Mr. Bunker.

When she was gone Harry sat down beside his lordship, and proceeded to smoke tobacco in silence, refusing the proffered decanters.

Said the Professor, softly:

'She'd be a fortune—a gem of the first water—upon the boards. As pianoforte player between the feats of magic, marvel, and mystery, or a medium under the magnetic influence of the operator, or a clairvoyante, or a thought-reader—or——' Here he relapsed into silence with a sigh.

'She looks intelligent,' said Daniel Fagg. 'When she hears about my Discovery she will——' Here he caught the eye of Harry Goslett, who was shaking a finger of warning, which he rightly interpreted to mean that dressmakers must not be asked to subscribe to learned works. This abashed him.

'Considered as a figurehead,' began Mr. Maliphant, 'I remember——'

'As a dressmaker, now—' interrupted Harry. 'Do Stepney dressmakers often play the piano like——well, like Miss Kennedy? Do they wear gold watches? Do they talk and move and act so much like real ladies, that no one could tell the difference? Answer me that, Mrs. Bormalack.'

'Well, Mr. Goslett, all I can say is, that she seems a very proper young lady to have in the house.'

'Proper, ma'am? If you were to search the whole of Stepney, I don't believe you could find such another. What does your ladyship say?'

'I say, Mr. Goslett, that in Canaan City the ladies who are dressmakers set the fashions to the ladies who are not; I was myself a dressmaker. And Aurelia Tucker, though she turns up her nose at our elevation, is, I must say, a lady who would do credit to any circle, even yours, Mrs. Bormalack. And such remarks about real ladies and dressmakers I do not understand, and I expected better manners, I must say. Look at his lordship's manners, Mr. Goslett, and his father was a carpenter, like you.'

CHAPTER IV.

UNCLE BUNKER.

'My uncle!'

It was the sprightly young cabinet-maker who sprang to his feet, and grasped the hand of the new-comer with an effusion not returned.

'Allow me, Miss Kennedy, to present to you my uncle, my uncle Bunker, whose praise you heard us sing with one consent last night. We did, indeed, revered one! Whatever you want brought, Miss Kennedy, from a piano to a learned pig, this is the man who will do it for you. A percentage on the cost, with a trifling charge for time, is all he seeks in return. He is generally known as the Benevolent Bunker; he is everybody's friend; especially he is beloved by persons behindhand with their rents, he is——'

Here Mr. Bunker drew out his watch, and observed with severity that his time was valuable, and that he came about business.

Angela observed that the sallies of his nephew were received with disfavour.

'Can we not,' pursued Harry, regardless of the cloud upon his uncle's brow—'can we not escape from affairs of urgency for one moment? Show us your lighter side, my uncle. Let Miss Kennedy admire the gifts and graces which you hide, as well as the sterner qualities which you exhibit.'

'Business, young lady,' the agent repeated, with a snort and a scowl. He took off his hat and rubbed his bald head with a silk pocket-handkerchief until it shone like polished marble. He was short in stature and of round figure. His face was red and puffy, as if he was fond of hot brandy-and-water, and he panted, being a little short of breath. His eyes were small and close together, which gave him a cunning look; his whiskers were large and grey; his lips were thick and firm, and his upper lip was long; his nose was broad, but not humorous; his head was set on firmly, and he had a square chin. Evidently he was a man of determination, and he was probably determined to look after his own interests first.

'I want,' said Angela, 'to establish myself in this neighbourhood as a dressmaker.'

'Very good,' said Mr. Bunker. 'That's practical. It is my business to do with practical people, not sniggerers and idle gigglers.' He looked at his nephew.

'I shall want a convenient house, and a staff of workwomen, and —and someone acquainted with business details and management.'

'Go on,' said Mr. Bunker. 'A forewoman you will want, of course.'

'Then, as I do not ask you to give me your advice for nothing, how are you generally paid for such services?'

'I charge,' he said, 'as arranged for beforehand. Time for talking, arranging, and house-hunting, half-a-crown an hour. That won't break you. And you won't talk too much, knowing you have to pay for it. Percentage on the rent, ten per cent. for the first year, nothing afterwards; if you want furniture, I will furnish your house from top to bottom on the same terms, and find you work-girls at five shillings a head.'

'Yes,' said Angela. 'I suppose I must engage a staff. And I suppose—' here she looked at Harry, as if for advice. 'I suppose that you *are* the best person to go to for assistance.'

'There is no one else,' said Mr. Bunker. 'That is why my terms are so low.'

His nephew whistled softly.

Mr. Bunker, after an angry growl at people who keep their hands in their pockets, proceeded to develop his views. Miss

Kennedy listened languidly, appearing to care very little about details, and agreeing to most expensive things in a perfectly reckless manner. She was afraid, for her part, that her own ignorance would be exposed if she talked. The agent, however, quickly perceived how ignorant she was, from this very silence, and resolved to make the best of so promising a subject. She could not possibly have much money—who ever heard of a Stepney dressmaker with any?—and she evidently had no experience. He would get as much of the money as he could, and she would be the gainer in experience! A most equitable arrangement, he thought, being one of those—too few, alas!—who keep before their eyes a lofty ideal, and love to act up to it.

When he had quite finished and fairly embarked his victim on a vast ocean of expenditure, comparatively, and with reference to Stepney and Mile End customs, he put up his pocket-book and remarked, with a smile, that he should want references of respectability.

'That's usual,' he said: 'I could not work without.'

Angela changed colour. To be asked for references was awkward.

'You can refer to me, my uncle,' said Harry.

Mr. Bunker took no notice of this proposition.

'You see, Miss,' he said, 'we don't know you, nor where you come from, nor what money you've got, nor how you got it. No doubt it is all right, and I'm sure you look honest. Perhaps you've got nothing to hide, and very likely there's good reasons for wanting to settle here.'

'My grandfather was a Whitechapel man by birth,' she replied. 'He left me some money. If you must have references, of course I could refer you to the lawyers who managed my little affairs. But I would rather, to save trouble, pay for everything on the spot, and the rent in advance.'

Mr. Bunker consented to waive his objection on payment of a sum of ten pounds down, it being understood and concluded that everything bought should be paid for on the spot, and a year's rent when the house was fixed upon, paid in advance; in consideration for which he said the young lady might, in subsequent transactions with strangers, refer to himself, a privilege which was nothing less than the certain passport to fortune.

'As for me,' he added, 'my motto is, "Think first of your client." Don't spare yourself for him; toil for him, think for him, rise up early and lie down late for him, and you reap your reward from grateful hearts. Lord! the fortunes I have made!'

'Virtuous Uncle Bunker!' cried Harry, with enthusiasm. 'Noble, indeed!'

The good man for the moment forgot the existence of his frivolous nephew, who had retired up the stage, so to speak. He opened his mouth as if to say something in anger, but refrained, and snorted.

'Now that we have settled that matter, Mr. Bunker,' the girl said without noticing the interruption; 'let us talk about other matters?'

'Are they business matters.'

'Not exactly; but still——'

'Time is money; an hour is half-a-crown.' He drew out his watch, and made a note of the time in his pocket-book. 'A quarter to eleven, Miss. If I didn't charge for time, what would become of my clients? Neglected; their interests ruined; the favourable moment gone. If I could tell you of a lady I established two years ago in one of the Brewery Houses, and what she's made of it, and what she says of me, you would be astonished. A grateful heart! and no better brandy-and-water, hot, with a slice of lemon, in the Whitechapel Road. But you were about to say, Miss——'

'She was going to begin with a hymn of praise, Uncle Bunker; paid in advance, like the rest. Gratitude for favours to come. But if you like to tell about the lady, do. Miss Kennedy will only charge you half-a-crown an hour. I'll mark time.'

'I think, young man,' said Mr. Bunker, 'that it is time you should go to your work. Stepney is not the place for sniggerin' peacocks; they'd better have stayed in the United States.'

'I am waiting till you have found me a place, too,' the young man replied. 'I too would wish to experience the grateful heart. It is peculiar to Whitechapel.'

'I was going to say,' Angela went on, 'that I hear you were connected with old Mr. Messenger for many years.'

'I was,' Mr. Bunker replied, and straightened his back with pride. 'I was—everybody knows that I was his confidential factotum and his familiar friend, as David was unto Jonathan.'

'Indeed! I used to—to—hear about him, formerly, a great deal.'

'Which made his final behaviour the more revolting,' Mr. Bunker continued, completing his sentence.

'Really! How did he finally behave?'

'It was always—ah! for twenty years, between us, "Bunker, my friend," or "Bunker, my trusted friend," tell me this, go there, find out that. I bought his houses; I let his houses; I told him who were responsible tenants; I warned him when shooting of moons seemed likely; I found out their antecedents and told him their stories. He had hundreds of houses, and he knew everybody that lived in them, and what their fathers were and their mothers were, and even their grandmothers. For he was a Whitechapel man by birth, and was proud of it.'

'But—the shameful behaviour!'

'All the time'—he shook his head and looked positively terrible in his wrath—'all the time I was piling up his property for him, houses here, streets there, he would encourage me in his way. "Go on, Bunker," he would say, "go on. A man who works for duty, like yourself, and to please his employers, and not out of consideration for the pay, is one of a million;" as I certainly was, Miss Kennedy. "One of a million," he said; "and you will have your reward after I am gone." Over and over again he said this, and of course I reckoned on it, and only wondered how much it would tot up to. Something, I thought, in four figures; it couldn't be less than four figures.' Here he stopped and rubbed his bald head again.

Angela caught the eyes of his nephew, who in his seat behind was silently laughing. He had caught the situation which she herself now readily comprehended. She pictured to herself this blatant Professor of Disinterestedness and Zeal buzzing and fluttering about her grandfather, and the quiet old man egging him on to more protestations.

'Four figures, for certain, it would be. Once I asked his advice as to how I should invest that reward when it did come. He laughed, Miss. Yes, for once he laughed, which I never saw him do before or after. I often think he must be sorry now to think of that time he laughed. Yah! I'm glad of it.'

So far as Angela could make it, his joy grew out of a persuasion that this particular fit of laughter was somehow interfering with her grandfather's present comforts, but perhaps she was wrong.

'He laughed,' continued Mr. Bunker, 'and he said that house property, in a rising neighbourhood, and if it could be properly looked after, was the best investment for money. House property, he said, as far as the money would go.'

'And when he died?' asked the listener, with another glance at Harry the unsympathetic, whose face expressed the keenest enjoyment.

'Nothing, if you please; not one brass farthing. Hunks! Hunks!' He grew perfectly purple, and clutched his fist as if he would fain be punching of heads. 'Not one word of me in his will. All for the girl: millions—millions—for her; and for me who done his work—nothing.'

'You have the glow of virtue,' said his nephew.

'It seems hard,' said Angela quickly, for the man looked dangerous, and seemed capable of transferring his wrath to his nephew; 'it seems hard to get nothing, if anything was promised.'

'It seems a pity,' Harry chimed in, 'that so much protesting was in vain. Perhaps Mr. Messenger took him at his word. What a dreadful thing to be believed!'

'A Hunks,' replied Mr. Bunker; 'a miserly Hunks.'

'Let me write a letter for you,' said Harry, 'to the heiress; we might forward it with a deputation of grateful hearts from Stepney.'

'Mind your own business,' growled his uncle. 'Well, Miss, you wanted to hear about Mr. Messenger, and you have heard. What next?'

'I should very much like, if it were possible,' Angela replied, 'to see this Great Brewery, of which one hears so much. Could you, for instance, take me over, Mr. Bunker?'

'At a percentage,' whispered his nephew, loud enough for both to hear.

'Messenger's Brewery,' he replied, 'is as familiar to me as my own fireside. I've grown up beside it. I know all the people in it. They all know me. Perhaps they respect me. For it was well known that a handsome legacy was promised, and expected. And nothing, after all. As for taking you over, of course I can. We will go at once. It will take time: and time is money.'

'May I go, too?' asked Harry.

'No, sir; you may not. It shall not be said in the Mile End Road that an industrious man like myself, a Worker for Clients, was seen in working time with an Idler.'

The walk from Stepney Green to Messenger and Marsden's Brewery is not far. You turn to the left if your house is on one side, and to the right if it is on the other; then you pass a little way down one street, and a little way, turning again to the left, up another—a direction which will guide you quite clearly. You then find yourself before a great gateway, the portals of which are closed; beside it is a smaller door, at which, in a little lodge, sits one who guards the entrance.

Mr. Bunker nodded to the porter, and entered unchallenged. He led the way across a court to a sort of outer office.

'Here,' he said, 'is the book for the visitors' names. We have them from all countries: great lords and ladies; foreign princes; and all the brewers from Germany and America, who come to get a wrinkle. Write your own name in it, too. Something, let me tell you, to have your name in such noble company.'

She took a pen and wrote hurriedly.

Mr. Bunker looked over her shoulder.

'Ho! ho!' he said, 'that is a good one! See what you've written.'

In fact, she had written her own name—Angela Marsden Messenger.

She blushed violently.

'How stupid of me! I was thinking of the heiress—they said it was her name.'

She carefully effaced the name, and wrote under it, 'A. M. Kennedy.'

'That's better. And now come along. A good joke, too! Fancy their astonishment if they had come to read it!'

'Does she often come—the heiress?'

'Never once been anigh the place; never seen it; never asks after it; never makes an inquiry about it. Draws the money and despises it.'

'I wonder she has not got more curiosity.'

'Ah! It's a shame for such a Property to come to a girl—a girl of twenty-one. Thirteen acres it covers—think of that! Seven hundred people it employs, most of them married. Why, if it was only to see her own vats, you'd think she'd get off of her luxurious pillows for once, and come here.'

They entered a great Hall, remarkable, at first, for a curious smell, not offensive, but strong and rather pungent. In it stood half-a-dozen enormous vats, closed by wooden slides, like shutters, fitting tightly. A man standing by opened one of these, and presently Angela was able to make out, through the volumes of steam, something bright going round, and a brown mess going with it.

'That is hops. Hops for the biggest Brewery, the richest, in all England. And all belonging to a girl who, likely enough, doesn't drink more than a pint and a half a day.'

'I dare say not,' said Angela; 'it must be a dreadful thing indeed to have so much beer, and to be able to drink so little.'

He led the way upstairs into another great Hall, where there was the grinding of machinery and another smell, sweet and heavy.

'This is where we crush the malt,' said Mr. Bunker—'see!' He stooped, and picked out of a great box a handful of the newly crushed malt. 'I suppose you thought it was roasted. Roasting, young lady,' he added with severity, 'is for Stout, not for Ale!'

Then he took her to another place, and showed her where the liquor stood to ferment; how it was cooled, how it was passed from one vat to another, how it was stored and kept in vats, dwelling perpetually on the magnitude of the business, and the irony of fortune in conferring this great gift upon a girl.

'I know now,' she interrupted, 'what the place smells like. It is fusel oil.' They were standing on a floor of open iron bars, above a row of long covered vats, within which the liquor was working and fermenting. Every now and then there would be a heaving of the surface, and a quantity of malt would then move suddenly over.

'We are famous,' said Mr. Bunker; 'I say *we*, having been the confidential friend and adviser of the late Mr. Messenger, deceased; we are famous for our Stout; also for our Mild; and we are now reviving our Bitter, which we had partially neglected. We use the Artesian Well, which is four hundred feet deep, for our Stout, but the Company's water for our Ales; and our water rate is two thousand pounds a year. The Artesian Well gives the ale a grey colour, which people don't like. Come into this room, now'—it was another great Hall covered with sacks. 'Hops again, Miss Kennedy; now, that little lot is worth ten thousand pounds—ten—thousand—think of that; and it is all spoiled by the rain, and has to be thrown away. We think nothing of losing ten thousand pounds here, nothing at all!'—he snapped his fingers—'it is a mere trifle to the girl who sits at home and takes the profits!'

He spoke as if he felt a personal animosity to the girl. Angela told him so.

'No wonder,' he said; 'she took all the legacy that ought to have been mine: no man can forgive that. You are young, Miss Kennedy, and are only beginning business; mark my words, one of these days you will feel how hard it is to put a little by—work as hard as you may—while here is this one having it put by for her, thousands a day, and doing nothing for it—nothing at all.'

Then they went into more great Halls, and up more stairs, and on to the roof, and saw more piles of sacks, more malt, and more hops. When they smelt the hops, it seemed as if their throats were tightened; when they smelt the fermentation, it seemed as if they were smelling fusel oil; when they smelt the plain crushed malt, it seemed as if they were getting swiftly, but sleepily, drunk. Everywhere and always the steam rolled backwards and forwards, and the grinding of the machinery went on, and the roaring of the furnaces; and the men went about to and fro at their work. They did not seem hard worked, nor were they pressed; their movements were leisurely, as if beer was not a thing to hurry; they were all rather pale of cheek, but fat and jolly, as if the beer was good and agreed with them. Some wore brown-paper caps, for it was a pretty draughty place; some went bare-headed, some wore the little round hat in fashion. And they went to another part, where men were rolling barrels about, as if they had been skittles, and here they saw vats holding three thousand barrels; and one thought of giant armies—say two hundred and fifty thousand thirsty Germans—beginning the Loot of London with one of these royal vats. And they went through stables, where hundreds of horses were stalled at night, each as big as an elephant, and much more useful.

In one great room, where there was the biggest vat of all, a man brought them beer to taste; it was Messenger's Stout. Angela took her glass and put it to her lips with a strange emotion—she felt as if she should like a quiet place to sit down in and cry. The great place was hers—all hers—and this was the Beer with which her mighty fortune had been made.

'Is it,' she asked, looking at the heavy foam of the frothing stout; 'is this Messenger's Entire?'

Bunker sat down and drank off his glass before replying. Then he laid his hands upon his stick and made answer, slowly, remembering that he was engaged at half-a-crown an hour, which is one halfpenny a minute.

'This is not Entire,' he said. 'You see, Miss Kennedy, there's fashions in beer, same as in clothes; once it was all Cooper, now you never hear of Cooper. Then it was all Half-an-arf—you never hear of anyone ordering Half-an-arf now. Then it was Stout. Nothing would go down but Stout, which I recommend myself, and find it nourishing. Next, Bitter came in, and honest Stout was despised; now, we're all for Mild. As for Entire, why—bless my soul!—Entire went out before I was born.

Why, it was Entire which made the fortune of the first Messenger that was—a poor little brewery he had, more than a hundred years ago, in this very place, because it was cheap for rent. In those days they used to brew Strong Ale, Old and Strong; Stout, same as now; and Twopenny, which was small-beer. And because the Old Ale was too strong, and the Stout too dear, and the Twopenny too weak, the people used to mix them all three together, and they called them "Three Threads;" and you may fancy the trouble it was for the pot-boys to go to one cask after another, all day long—because they had no beer engines then. Well, what did Mr. Messenger do? He brewed a beer as strong as the Three Threads, and he called it Messenger's Entire Three Threads, meaning that here you had 'em all in one, and that's what made his fortune; and now, young lady, you've seen all I've got to show you, and we will go.'

'I make bold, young woman,' he said, as they went away, 'to give you a warning about my nephew. He's a good-looking chap, for all he's worthless, though it's a touch-and-go style that's not my idea of good looks. Still, no doubt some would think him handsome. Well, I warn you.'

'That is very good of you, Mr. Bunker. Why do you warn me?'

'Why, anybody can see already that he's taken with your good looks. Don't encourage him. Don't keep company with him. He's been away a good many years—in America—and I fear he's been in bad company.'

'I am sorry to hear that.'

'You saw his sniggerin', sneerin' way with me, his uncle. That doesn't look the right sort of man to take up with, I think. And as for work, he seems not to want any. Says he can afford to wait a bit. Talks about opening a cabinet-makin' shop. Well, he will have none of my money. I tell him that beforehand. A young jackanapes! A painted peacock! I believe, Miss Kennedy, that he drinks. Don't have nothing to say to him. As for what he did in the States, and why he left the country, I don't know; and if I were you, I wouldn't ask.'

With this warning he left her, and Angela went home trying to realise her own great possessions. Hundreds of houses; rows of streets; this enormous brewery, working day after day for her profit and advantage; and these invested moneys, these rows of figures which represented her personal property. All hers! All her own! All the property of a girl! Surely, she thought, this was a heavy burden to be laid upon one frail back.

CHAPTER V.

THE CARES OF WEALTH.

It is, perhaps, a survival of feudal customs that in English minds a kind of proprietorship is assumed over one's dependents, those who labour for a man and are paid by him. It was this feeling of responsibility which had entered into the mind of Angela, and was now firmly fixed there. All these men, this army of seven hundred brewers, drivers, clerks, accountants, and the rest, seemed to belong to her. Not only did she pay them the wages and salaries which gave them their daily bread, but they lived in her own houses among the streets which lie to the right and to the left of the Mile End Road. The very chapels where they worshipped, being mostly of some Nonconformist sect, stood on her own ground —everything was hers.

The richest heiress in England! She repeated this to herself over and over again, in order to accustom herself to the responsibilities of her position, not to the pride of it. If she dwelt too long upon the subject, her brain reeled. What was she to do with all her money? A man—like her grandfather—often feels joy in the mere amassing of wealth; to see it grow is enough pleasure; other men in their old age sigh over bygone years, which seem to have failed in labour or effort. Then men sigh over bygone days in which more might have been saved. But girls cannot be expected to reach these heights. Angela only weakly thought what an immense sum of money she had, and asked herself what she could do, and how she should spend her wealth to the best advantage.

The most pitiable circumstance attending the possession of wealth is that no one sympathises with the possessor. Yet his or her sufferings are sometimes very great. They begin at school where a boy or a girl, who is going to be very rich, feels already set apart. He loses the greatest spur to action. It is when they grow up, however, that the real trouble begins. For a girl with large possessions is always suspicious lest a man should pretend to love her for the sake of her money; she has to suspect all kinds of people who want her to give, lend, advance, or promise them money; she is the mere butt of every society, hospital, and institution; her table is crowded every morning with letters from decayed gentlewomen and necessitous clergymen and recommenders of 'cases;' she longs to do good in her generation, but does not know how; she is expected to buy quantities of things which she does not want, and to pay exorbitant prices for everything; she has to be a patron of Art: she is invited to supply every woman throughout the country who wants a mangle with that useful article; she is told that it is her duty to build new churches over the length and breadth of the land; she is earnestly urged to endow new Colonial bishoprics over all the surface of the habitable globe. Then she has to live in a great house and have troops of idle servants. And, whether she likes it or not, she has to go a great deal into society.

All this, without the least sympathy or pity from those who ought to feel for her, who are in the happy position of having no money. Nobody pities an heiress; to express pity would seem like an exaggerated affectation of virtue, the merest pedantry of superiority; it would not be believed. Therefore, while all the world is agreed in envying her, she is bemoaning her sad fate. Fortunately, she is rare.

As yet, Angela was only just at the commencement of her troubles. The girls at Newnham had not spoiled her by flattery or envy; some of them even pitied her sad burden of money; she had as yet only realised part of the terrible isolation of wealth; she had not grown jealous, or suspicious, or arrogant, as in advancing years often happens with the very rich; she had not yet learned to regard the whole world as composed entirely of money-grabbers. All she had felt hitherto was that she went in constant danger from interested wooers, and that youth, combined with money-bags, is an irresistible attraction to men of all ages. Now, however, for the first time, she understood the magnitude of her possessions, and felt the real weight of her responsibilities. She saw, for the first time, the hundreds of men working for her; she saw the houses whose tenants paid rent to her; she visited her great Brewery; and she asked herself the question, which Dives no doubt frequently asked—What she had done to be specially set apart and selected from humanity as an exception to the rule of labour? Even Bunker's complaint about the difficulty of putting by a little, and his indignation because she herself could put by so much, seemed pathetic.

She walked about the sad and monotonous streets of East London, reflecting upon these subjects. She did not know where she was, nor the name of any street; in a general way she knew that most of the street probably belonged to herself, and that it was an inexpressibly dreary street. When she was tired she asked her way back again. No one insulted her; no one troubled her; no one turned aside to look at her. When she went home, she sat, silent for the most part, in the common sitting-room. The boarding-house was inexpressibly stupid except when the sprightly young mechanic was present, and she was even angry with herself for finding his society pleasant. What could there be, she asked, in common between herself and this workman? Then she wondered, remembering that so far she had found nothing in her own that was not also in his. Could it be that two years of Newnham had elevated her mentally no higher than the level of a cabinet-maker?

Her meditation brought her, in the course of a few days, to the point of action. She would do something. She therefore wrote a letter instructing her solicitors to get her, immediately, two reports, carefully drawn up.

First, she would have a report on the Brewery, its average profits for the last ten years, with a list of all the *employés*, the number of years' service, the pay they received, and, as regards the juniors, the characters they bore.

Next, she wanted a report on her property at the East End, with a list of her tenants, their occupations and trades, and a map showing the position of her houses.

When she had got these reports she would be, she felt, in a position to work upon them.

Meantime, Mr. Bunker not having yet succeeded in finding a house suitable for her dressmaking business, she had nothing to do but to go on walking about and to make herself acquainted with the place. Once or twice she was joined by the Idle Apprentice, who, to do him justice, was always ready to devote his unprofitable time to these excursions, which his sprightliness enlivened.

There is a good deal to see in and about Stepney, though it can hardly be called a beautiful suburb. Formerly it was a very big place, so big that, though Bethnal Green was once chopped off at one end and Limehouse at the other, not to speak of Shadwell, Wapping, Stratford, and other great cantles, there still remains a parish as big as St. Pancras. Yet, though it is big, it is not proud. Great men have not been born there or lived there: there are no associations. Stepney Green has not even got its Polly, like Paddington Green and Wapping Old Stairs; the streets are all mean, and the people for the most part stand upon that level where respectability—beautiful quality!—begins.

'Do you know the West End?' Angela asked her companion when they were gazing together upon an unlovely avenue of small houses which formed a street. She was thinking how monotonous must be the daily life in these dreary streets.

'Yes, I know the West End. What is it you regret in your comparison?'

Angela hesitated.

'There are no carriages here,' said the workman; 'no footmen in powder or coachmen in wigs; there are no ladies on horseback, no great squares with big houses, no clubs, no opera-house, no picture-galleries. All the rest of life is here.'

'But these things make life,' said the heiress. 'Without society and art, what is life?'

'Perhaps these people find other pleasures; perhaps the monotony gets relieved by hope, and anxiety, and love, and death, and such things.' The young man forgot how the weight of this monotony had fallen upon his own brain: he remembered, now, that his companion would probably have to face this dreariness all her life, and he tried in a kindly spirit to divert her mind from the thought of it. 'You forget that each life is individual, and has its own separate interests; and these are apart from the conditions which surround it. Do you know my cousin, Tom Coppin?'

'No; what is he?'

'He is a printer by trade. Of late years he has been engaged in setting up atheistic publications. Of course, this occupation has had the effect of making him an earnest Christian. Now he is a Captain of the Salvation Army.'

'But I thought——'

'Don't think, Miss Kennedy; look about and see for yourself. He lives on five-and-twenty shillings a week, in one room, in just such a street as this. I laughed at him at first; now I laugh no longer. You can't laugh at a man who spends his whole life preaching and singing hymns among the Whitechapel roughs, taking as part of the day's work all the rotten eggs, brickbats, and kicks that come in his way. Do you think his life would be less monotonous if he lived in Belgrave Square?'

'But all are not preachers and captains in the Salvation Army.'

'No; there is my cousin Dick. We are, very properly, Tom, Dick, and Harry. Dick is, like myself, a cabinet-maker. He is also a politician, and you may hear him at his Club denouncing the House of Lords, and the Church, and Monarchical Institutions, and hereditary everything, till you wonder the people do not rise and tear all down. They don't, you see, because they are quite accustomed to big talk, and it never means anything, and they are not really touched by the dreadful wickedness of the Peers.'

'I should like to know your cousins.'

'You shall. They don't like me, because I have been brought up in a somewhat different school. But that does not greatly matter.'

'Will they like me?' It was a very innocent question, put in perfect innocence, and yet the young man blushed.

'Everybody,' he said, 'is bound to like you.'

She changed colour and became silent, for a while.

He went on presently:

'We are all as happy as we deserve to be, I suppose. If these people knew what to do in order to make themselves happier, they would go and do that thing. Meantime, there is always love for everybody, and success, and presently the end—is not life everywhere monotonous?'

'No,' she replied stoutly; 'mine is not.'

He was thinking at the moment that of all lives a dressmaker's must be one of the most monotonous. She remembered that she was a dressmaker, and explained.

'There are the changes of fashion, you see.'

'Yes, but you are young,' he replied, from his vantage-ground of twenty-three years, being two years her superior. 'Mine is monotonous when I come to think of it. Only, you see, one does not think of it oftener than one can help. Besides, as far as I have got, I like the monotony.'

'Do you like work?'

'Not much, I own. Do you?'

'No.'

'Yet you are going to settle down at Stepney.'

'And you, too?'

'As for me, I don't know.' The young man coloured slightly. 'I may go away again, soon, and find work elsewhere.'

'I was walking yesterday,' she went on, 'in the great, great churchyard of Stepney Church. Do you know it?'

'Yes—that is, I have not been inside the walls. I am not fond of churchyards.'

'There they lie—acres of graves. Thousands upon thousands of dead people, and not one of the whole host remembered. All have lived, worked, hoped much, got a little, I suppose, and died. And the world none the better.'

'Nay, that you cannot tell.'

'Not one of all remembered,' she repeated. 'There is an epitaph in the churchyard which might do for every one:—

> Here lies the body of Daniel Saul,
> Spitalfields weaver; and that is all.

That is all.'

'What more did the fellow deserve?' asked her companion. 'No doubt he was a very good weaver. Why, he has got a great posthumous reputation. You have quoted him.'

He did not quite follow her line of thought. She was thinking in some vague way of the waste of material.

'They had very little power of raising the world, to be sure. They were quite poor, ill-educated, and without resource.'

'It seems to me,' replied her companion, 'that nobody has any power of raising the world. Look at the preachers and the writers and the teachers. By their united efforts they contrive to shore up the world and keep it from falling lower. Every now and then down we go, flop—a foot or two of civilisation lost. Then we lose a hundred years or so until we can get shoved up again.'

'Should not rich men try to shove up, as you call it?'

'Some of them do try, I believe,' he replied; 'I don't know how they succeed.'

'Suppose, for instance, this young lady, this Miss Messenger, who owns all this property, were to use it for the benefit of the people, how would she begin, do you suppose?'

'Most likely she would bestow a quantity of money to a hospital, which would pauperise the doctors, or she would give away quantities of blankets, bread, and beef in the winter, which would pauperise the people.'

Angela sighed.

'That is not very encouraging.'

'What you could do, by yourself, if you pleased, among the working girls of the place, would be, I suppose, worth ten times what she could do with all her giving. I'm not much in the Charity line myself, Miss Kennedy, but I should say, from three weeks' observation of the place and conversation with the respectable Bunker, that Miss Messenger's money is best kept out of the parish, which gets on very well without it.'

'Her money! Yes, I see. Yet she herself——' She paused.

'We working men and women——'

'You are not a working man, Mr. Goslett.' She faced him with her steady, honest eyes, as if she would read the truth in his. 'Whatever else you are, you are not a working man.'

He replied without the least change of colour—

'Indeed, I am the son of Sergeant Goslett of the —th Regiment, who fell in the Indian Mutiny. I am the nephew of good old Benjamin Bunker, the virtuous and the disinterested. I was educated in rather a better way than most of my class, that is all.'

'Is it true that you have lived in America?'

'Quite true.' He did not say how long he had lived there.

Angela, with her own guilty secret, was suspicious that perhaps this young man might also have his.

'Men of your class,' she said, 'do not as a rule talk like you.'

'Matter of education—that is all.'

'And you are really a cabinet-maker?'

'If you will look into my room and see my lathe, I will show you specimens of my work. O thou unbeliever! Did you think that I might have "done something," and so be fain to hide my head?'

It was a cruel thing to suspect him in this way, yet the thought had crossed her mind that he might be a fugitive from the law and society, protected for some reason by Bunker.

Harry returned to the subject of the place.

'What we want here,' he said, 'as it seems to me, is a little more of the pleasures and graces of life. To begin with, we are not poor and in misery, but for the most part fairly well off. We have great works here—half-a-dozen Breweries, though none so big as Messenger's; chemical works, sugar refineries, though these are a little depressed at present, I believe; here are all the docks; then we have silk-weavers, rope-makers, sail-makers, match-makers, cigar-makers; we build ships; we tackle jute, though what jute is, and what we do with it, I know not; we cut corks; we make soap, and we make fireworks; we build boats. When all our works are in full blast, we make quantities of money. See us on Sundays, we are not a bad-looking lot; healthy, well-dressed, and tolerably rosy. But we have no pleasures.'

'There must be some.'

'A theatre and a music-hall in Whitechapel Road. That has to serve for two millions of people. Now, if this young heiress wanted to do any good, she should build a Palace of Pleasure here.'

'A Palace of Pleasure!' she repeated. 'It sounds well. Should it be a kind of Crystal Palace?'

'Well!' It was quite a new idea, but he replied as if he had been considering the subject for years. 'Not quite—with modifications.'

'Let us talk over your Palace of Pleasure,' she said, 'at another time. It sounds well. What else should she do?'

'That is such a gigantic thing, that it seems enough for one person to attempt. However, we can find something else for her—why, take schools. There is not a public school for the whole two millions of East London. Not one place in which boys—to say nothing of girls—can be brought up in generous ideas. She must establish at least half-a-dozen public schools for boys and as many for girls.'

'That is a very good idea. Will you write and tell her so?'

'Then there are libraries, reading-rooms, clubs, but all these would form part of the Palace of Pleasure.'

'Of course. I would rather call it a Palace of Delight. Pleasure seems to touch a lower note. We should have music-rooms for concerts as well.'

'And a school for music.' The young man became animated as the scheme unfolded itself.

'And a school for dancing.'

'Miss Kennedy,' he said with enthusiasm, 'you *ought* to have the spending of all this money! And—why, you would hardly believe it—but there is not in the whole of this parish of Stepney a single dance given in the year. Think of that! But perhaps——' he stopped again.

'You mean that dressmakers do not, as a rule, dance? However, I do, and so there must be a school for dancing. There must be a great college to teach all these accomplishments.'

'Happy Stepney!' cried the young man, carried out of himself. 'Thrice happy Stepney! Glorified Whitechapel! Beautified Bow! What things await ye in the fortunate future!'

He left her at the door of Bormalack's, and went off on some voyage of discovery of his own.

The girl retreated to her own room. She had now hired a sitting-room all to herself, and paid three months in advance, and sat down to think. Then she took paper and pen and began to write.

She was writing down, while it was hot in her head, the threefold scheme which this remarkable young workman had put into her head.

'We women are weak creatures,' she said with a sigh. 'We long to be up and doing, but we cannot carve out our work for ourselves. A man must be with us to suggest or direct it. The College of Art—yes, we will call it the College of Art; the Palace of Delight; the public schools. I should think that between the three a good deal of money might be got through. And oh! to think of converting this dismal suburb into a home for refined and cultivated people!'

In blissful reverie she saw already the mean houses turned into red brick Queen Anne terraces and villas; the dingy streets were planted with avenues of trees; art flourished in the house as well as out of it; life was rendered gracious, sweet, and lovely.

And to think that this result was due to the suggestion of a common working man!

But then, he had lived in the States. Doubtless in the States all the working men——But was that possible?

CHAPTER VI.

A FIRST STEP.

With this great programme before her, the responsibilities of wealth were no longer so oppressive. When power can be used for beneficent purposes, who would not be powerful? And beside the mighty shadow of this scheme, the smaller project for which Bunker was finding a house looked small indeed. Yet, was it not small, but great, and destined continually to grow greater?

Bunker came to see her from day to day, reporting progress. He heard of a house here or a house there, and went to see it. But it was too large; and of another, but it was too small; and of a third, but it was not convenient for her purpose; and so on. Each house took up a whole day in examination, and Bunker's bill was getting on with great freedom.

The delay, however, gave Angela time to work out her new ideas on paper. She invoked the assistance of her friend, the cabinet-maker, with ideas; and, under the guise of amusing themselves, they drew up a long and business-like prospectus of the proposed new institutions.

First, there were the High Schools, of which she would found six—three for boys and three for girls. The great feature of these schools was to be that they should give a liberal education for a very small fee, and that in their playgrounds, their discipline, and, as far as possible, their hours, they were to resemble the great public schools.

'They must be endowed for the masters' and mistresses' salaries, and with scholarships; and—and—I think the boys and girls ought to have dinner in the school, so as not to go home all day; and—and—there will be many things to provide for each school.'

She looked as earnest over this amusement, Harry said, as if she were herself in possession of the fortune which they were thus administering. They agreed that when the schools were built, an endowment of 70,000*l.* each, which would yield 2,000*l.* a year, ought to be enough, with the school fees, to provide for the education of five hundred in each school. Then they proceeded with the splendid plan of the new College. It was agreed that learning, properly so called, should be entirely kept out of the programme. No Political Economy, said the Newnham student, should be taught there. Nor any of the usual things—Latin, Greek, mathematics, and so forth—said the young man from the United States. What, then, remained?

Everything. The difficulty in making such a selection of studies is to know what to omit.

'We are to have,' said Harry, now almost as enthusiastic as Angela herself, 'a thing never before attempted. We are to have a College of Art. What a grand idea! It was yours, Miss Kennedy.'

'No,' she replied, 'it was yours. If it comes to anything, we shall always remember that it was yours.'

An amiable contest was finished by their recollecting that it was only a play, and they laughed and went on, half ashamed, and yet both full of enthusiasm.

'The College of Art!' he repeated; 'why, there are a hundred kinds of art; let us include accomplishments.'

They would; they did.

They finally resolved that there should be professors, lecturers, or teachers, with convenient class rooms, theatres and lecture halls in the following accomplishments and graces:—Dancing, but there must be the old as well as the new kinds of dancing. The waltz was not to exclude the minuet, the reel, the country dance, or the old square dances; the pupils would also have such dances as the *bolero*, the *tarantella*, and other national jumperies. Singing, which was to be a great feature, as anybody could sing, said Angela, if they were taught. 'Except my Uncle Bunker!' said Harry. Then there were to be musical instruments of all kinds. Skating, bicycling, lawn tennis, racquets, fives, and all kinds of games; rowing, billiards, archery, rifle shooting. Then there was to be acting, with reading and recitation; there were to be classes on gardening, on cookery, and on the laws of beauty in costume. 'The East End shall be independent of the rest of the world in fashion,' said Angela; 'we will dress according to the rules of Art!' 'You shall,' cried Harry, 'and your own girls shall be the new dressmakers to the whole of glorified Stepney.' Then there were to be lectures, not in literature, but in letter-writing, especially love-letter-writing, versifying, novel-writing, and essay-writing; that is to say, on the more delightful forms of literature—so that poets and novelists should arise, and the East End, hitherto a barren desert, should blossom with flowers. Then there was to be a Professor of Grace, because a graceful carriage of the body is so generally neglected; and Harry, who had a slim figure and long legs, began to indicate how the Professor would probably carry himself. Next there were to be Professors of Painting, Drawing, Sculpture and Design; and lectures on Furniture, Colour, and Architecture. The Arts of photography, china painting, and so forth, were to be cultivated; and there were to be classes for the encouragement of leather work, crewel work, fret-work, brass-work, wood and ivory carving, and so forth.

'There shall be no house in the East End,' cried the girl, 'that shall not have its panels painted by one member of the family; its wood-work carved by another, its furniture designed by a third, its windows planted with flowers by another.'

Her eyes glowed, her lips trembled.

'You *ought* to have had the millions,' said Harry.

'Nay, you, for you devised it all!' she replied. She was so glowing, so rosy red, so soft and sweet to look upon; her eyes were so full of possible love—though of love she was not thinking—that almost the young man fell upon his knees to worship this Venus.

'And all these beautiful things,' she went on, breathless, 'are only designed for the sake of the Palace of Delight.'

'It shall stand somewhere near the central place, this Stepney Green, so that all the East can get to it.

'It shall have many halls,' she went on. 'One of them shall be for concerts, and there shall be an organ: one of them shall be for a theatre, and there will be a stage and everything: one shall be a dancing hall, one a skating rink, one a hall for lectures, readings and recitations: one a picture gallery, one a permanent exhibition of our small Arts. We will have our concerts performed from our School of Music: our plays shall be played by our amateurs taught at our School of Acting; our exhibitions shall be supplied by our own people; the things will be sold, and they will soon be sold off and replaced, because they will be cheap. Oh! oh! oh!' She clasped her hands, and fell back in her chair, overpowered with the thought.

'It will cost much money,' said Harry, weakly, as if money was any object—in dreams.

'The College must be endowed with 30,000*l.* a year, which is a million of money,' Angela replied, making a little calculation. 'That money must be found. As for the Palace, it will require nothing but the building, and a small annual income to pay for repairs and servants. It will be governed by a Board of Directors, elected by the people themselves, to whom the Palace will belong. And no one shall pay or be paid for any performance. And the only condition of admission will be good behaviour, with exclusion as a penalty.'

The thing which she contemplated was a deed the like of which makes to tingle the ears of those who hear it. To few indeed is it given to communicate to a whole nation this strange and not unpleasant sensation.

One need not disguise the fact that the possession of this power, and the knowledge of her own benevolent intentions, gave Angela a better opinion of herself than she had ever known before. Herein, my friends, lies, if you will rightly regard it, the true reason of the feminine love for power illustrated by Chaucer. For the few who have from time to time wielded authority have ever been persuaded that they wielded it wisely, benevolently, religiously, and have of course congratulated themselves on the possession of so much virtue. What mischiefs, thought Elizabeth of England, Catharine of Russia, Semiramis of Babylon, and Angela of Whitechapel, might have followed had a less wise and virtuous person been on the throne!

It was not unnatural, considering how much she was with Harry at this time, and how long were their talks with each other, that she should have him a great deal in her mind. For these ideas were certainly his, not hers. Newnham, she reflected humbly, had not taught her to originate. She knew that he was but a cabinet-maker by trade. Yet, when she involuntarily compared him, his talk, his manners, his bearing, with the men whom she had met, the young Dons and the undergraduates of Cambridge, the clever young fellows in society who were reported to write for the 'Saturday,' and the Berties and Algies of daily life, she owned to herself that in no single point did this cabinet-maker fellow compare unfavourably with any of them. He seemed as well taught as the last made Fellow of Trinity who came to lecture on Literature and Poetry at Newnham; as cultivated as the mediæval Fellow who took Philosophy and Psychology, and was supposed to entertain ideas on religion so original as to amount to a Fifth Gospel: as quick as the most thoroughgoing Society man who has access to studios, literary circles, musical people and æsthetes; and as careless as any Bertie or Algie of the whole set. This it was which made her blush, because, if he had been a common man, a mere Bunker, he might, with his knowledge of his class, have proved so useful a servant to her, so admirable a vizier. Now, unfortunately, she felt that she could only make him useful in this way after she had confided in him; and that to confide in him might raise dangerous thoughts in the young man's head. No; she must not confide in him.

It shows what a thoughtful young person Angela was that she would blush all by herself only to think of this danger to Harry Goslett.

She passed all that night and the whole of the next day and night in a dream over the Palace of Delight and the College for educating people in sweet and pleasant things—the College of Art.

On the next morning a cold chill fell upon her, caused I know not how; not by the weather, which was the bright and hot weather of last July; not by any ailment of her own, because

Angela owned the most perfect mechanism ever constructed by Nature; nor by any unpleasantness in the House, because, now that she had her own room, she generally breakfasted alone; nor by anything in the daily papers—which frequently, by their evil telegrams and terrifying forebodings, do poison the spring and fountain-head of the day; nor by any letter, because the only one she had was from Constance Woodcote at Newnham, and it told the welcome news that she was appointed Mathematical Lecturer with so much a head for fees, and imploring Angela to remember her promise that she would endow Newnham with a scholarship. Endow Newnham! Why, she was going to have a brand-new college of her own, to say nothing of the High Schools for boys and girls. Perhaps the cause of her depression was the appearance of Bunker, who came to tell her that he had at last found the house which would suit her. No other house in the neighbourhood was in any way to compare with it; the house stood close by, at the south-west corner of Stepney Green. It was ready for occupation, the situation was as desirable as that of Tirzah the Beautiful; the rent was extremely low, considering the many advantages; all the nobility and gentry of the place, he declared, would flock round a dressmaker situated in Stepney Green itself; there were rooms for show-rooms, with plenty of other rooms and everything which would be required; finally, as if this were an additional recommendation, the house *belonged to himself.*

'I am ready,' he said with a winning smile, 'to make a sacrifice of my own interests in order to oblige a young lady, and I will take a lower rent from you than I would from anybody else.'

She went with him to 'view' the house. One looks at a picture, a horse, an estate, a book, but one 'views' a house. Subtle and beautiful distinction, which shows the poetry latent in the heart of every house agent! It was Bunker's own. Surely that was not the reason why it was let at double the rent of the next house, which belonged to Angela herself, nor why the tenant had to undertake all the repairs, paper, and painting, external and internal, nor why the rent began from that very day, instead of the half-quarter or the next quarter-day. Bunker himself assured Miss Kennedy that he had searched the whole neighbourhood for a suitable place, but could find none so good as his own house. As for the houses of the Messenger property, they were liable, he said, to the demands of a lawyer's firm, which had no mercy on a tenant, while as for himself, he was full of compassion, and always ready to listen to reason. He wanted no other recommendation than a year's rent paid in advance, and would undertake to execute, at the tenant's cost, the whole of the painting, papering, whitewashing, roofing, pipes, chimneys, and general work himself; 'whereas, young lady,' he added, 'if you had taken one of those Messenger houses, you cannot tell in what hands you would have found yourself, nor what charges you would have had to pay.'

He shook his fat head, and rattled his keys in his pocket. So strong is the tendency of the human mind to believe what is said, in spite of all experience to the contrary, that his victim smiled and thanked him, knowing very well that the next minute she would be angry with herself for so easily becoming a dupe to a clumsy rogue.

She thanked him for his consideration, she said, yet she was uneasily conscious that he was overreaching her in some way, and she hesitated.

'On the Green,' he said. 'What a position! Looking out on the garden! With such rooms! And so cheap!'

'I don't know,' she replied, 'I must consult some one.'

'As to that,' he said, 'there may be another tenant; I can't keep offers open. Take it, Miss, or leave it. There!'

While she still hesitated, he added one more recommendation.

'An old house it is, but solid, and will stand for ever. Why, old Mr. Messenger was born here.'

'Was he?' she cried, 'was my—was Mr. Messenger actually born here?'

She hesitated no longer. She took the house at his own price; she accepted his terms, extortionate and grasping as they were.

When the bargain was completed—when she had promised to sign the agreement for a twelvemonth, pay a year in advance, and appoint the disinterested one her executor of repairs, she returned to Bormalack's. In the doorway, a cigarette in his mouth, lounged the Idle Apprentice.

'I saw you,' he said, 'with the benevolent Bunker. You have fallen a prey to my uncle?'

'I have taken a house from him.'

'The two phrases are convertible. Those who take his houses are his victims. I hope no great mischief is done.'

'Not much, I think.'

The young man threw away his cigarette.

'Seriously, Miss Kennedy,' he said, 'my good uncle will possess himself of all the money he can get out of you. Have a care.'

'He can do me no harm, thank you all the same. I wanted a house soon, and he has found me one. What does it matter if I pay a little more than I ought?'

'What does it matter?' Harry was not versed in details of trade, but he knew enough to feel that this kind of talk was unpractical. 'What does it matter? My dear young lady, if you go into business, you must look after the sixpences.'

Miss Kennedy looked embarrassed. She had betrayed herself, she thought. 'I know—I know. But he talked me over.'

'I *have* heard,' said the practical man, looking profoundly wise, 'that he who would save money must even consider that there is a difference between a guinea and a sovereign, and that he shouldn't pay a cabman more than twice his fare, and that it is wrong to pay half-a-guinea for Heidsieck Monopole when he can get Pommery and Greno at seven-and-sixpence.'

Then he, too, paused abruptly, because he felt as if he had betrayed himself. What have cabinet-makers to do with Pommery and Greno? Fortunately, Angela did not hear the latter part of the speech. She was reflecting on the ease with which a crafty man—say Bunker—may compass his ends with the simple—say herself.

'I do not pretend,' he said, 'to know all the ropes, but I should not have allowed you to be taken in quite so readily by this good uncle. Do you know—' his eyes, when they were serious, which was not often, were really good. Angela perceived they were serious now—'Do you know that the name of the Uncle who was indirectly, so to speak, connected with the Robin Redbreasts, was originally Bunker? He changed it after the children were dead, and he came into the property.'

'I wish you had been with me,' she said simply. 'But I suppose I must take my chance as other girls do?'

'Most other girls have got men to advise them. Have you no one?'

'I might have'—she was thinking of her lawyers—who were paid to advise her if required. 'But I will find out things for myself.'

'And at what a price! Are your pockets lined with gold, Miss Kennedy?' They certainly were, but he did not know it.

'I will try to be careful. Thank you.'

'As regards going with you, I am always at your command. I will be your servant, if you will accept me as such.'

This was going a step farther than seemed altogether safe. Angela was hardly prepared to receive a cabinet-maker, however polite and refined he might seem, as a lover.

'I believe,' she said, 'that in our class of life it is customary for young people to "keep company," is it not?'

'It is not uncommon,' he replied, with much earnestness. 'The custom has even been imitated by the higher classes.'

'What I mean is this, that I am not going to keep company with anyone; but, if you please to help me, if I ask your advice, I shall be grateful.'

'Your gratitude,' he said, with a smile, 'ought to make any man happy!'

'Your compliments,' she retorted, 'will certainly kill my gratitude; and now, Mr. Goslett, don't you really think that you should try to do some work? Is it right to lounge away the days among the streets? Are *your* pockets, I may ask, lined with gold?'

'I am looking for work. I am hunting everywhere for work. My uncle is going to find me a workshop. Then I shall request the patronage of the nobility and gentry of Stepney, Whitechapel, and the Mile End Road. H. G. respectfully solicits a trial.' He laughed as if there could be no doubt at all about the future, and as if a few years of looking around were of no importance. Then he bowed to Angela in the character of the Complete Cabinet-maker. 'Orders, madam, orders executed with neatness and despatch. The highest price given for second-hand furniture.'

She had got her house, however, though she was going to pay far too much for it. That was a great thing, and, as the more important schemes could not be all commenced at a moment's notice, she would begin with the lesser—her dressmaker's shop.

Here Mr. Goslett could not help her. She applied, therefore, again to Mr. Bunker, who had a Registry office for situations wanted. 'My terms,' he said, 'are five shillings on application and five shillings for each person engaged.'

He did not say that he took half-a-crown from each person who wanted a place and five shillings on her getting the place. His ways were ways of pleasantness, and on principle he never spoke of things which might cause unpleasant remarks. Besides, no one knew the trouble he had to take in suiting people.

'I knew,' he said, 'that you would come back to me. People will only find out my worth when I am gone.'

'I hope you will be worth a great deal, Mr. Bunker,' said Angela.

'Pretty well, young lady. Pretty well. Ah! my nephews will be the gainers. But not what I might have been if it had not been for the meanness, the—the—Hunxiness of that wicked old man.'

'Do you think you can find me what I want, Mr. Bunker?'

'*Can* I?' He turned over the leaves of a great book. 'Look at this long list; all ready to better themselves. Apprentices anxious to get through their articles, and improvers to be dressmakers, and dressmakers to be forewomen, and forewomen to be mistresses. That is the way of the world, young lady. Sweet contentment, where art thou?' The pastoral simplicity of his words and attitude were inexpressibly comic.

'And how are you going to begin, Miss Kennedy?'

'Quietly, at first.'

'Then you'll want a matter of one or two dressmakers, and half-a-dozen improvers. The apprentices will come later.'

'What are the general wages in this part of London?'

'The dressmakers get sixteen shillings a week; the improvers six. They bring their own dinners, and you give them their tea. But, of course, you know all that.'

'Of course,' said Angela, making a note of the fact, notwithstanding.

'As for one of your dressmakers, I can recommend you Rebekah Hermitage, daughter of the Rev. Percival Hermitage. She cannot get a situation, because of her father's religious opinions.'

'That seems strange. What are they?'

'Why, he's Minister of the Seventh Day Independents. They've got a chapel in Redman's Row; they have their services on Saturday because, they say—and it seems true—that the Fourth Commandment has never been abolished any more than the rest of them. I wonder the Bishops don't take it up. Well, there it is. On Saturdays she won't work, and on Sundays she don't like to, because the other people don't.'

'Has she any religious objection,' asked Angela, 'to working on Monday or Tuesday?'

'No; and I'll send her over, Miss Kennedy, this evening, if you will see her. You'll get her cheap because no one else will have her. Very good. Then there is Nelly Sorensen. I know she would like to go out, but her father is particular. Not that he's any right to be, being a Pauper. If a man like me or the late Mr. Messenger, my friend, chooses to be particular, it's nothing but right. As for Captain Sorensen—why, it's Pride after the fall, instead of before it. Which makes it, to a substantial man, sickenin'.'

'Who is Captain Sorensen?'

'He lives in the Asylum along the Whitechapel Road, only ten minutes or so from here. Nelly Sorensen is as clever a workwoman as you will get. If I were you, Miss Kennedy, I would go and find her at home. Then you can see her work and talk to her. As for her father, keep him in his right place. Pride in an Almshouse! Why, you'd hardly believe it; but I wanted to put his girl in a shop where they employ fifty hands, and he wouldn't have it, because he didn't like the character of the proprietor. Said he was a grinder and an oppressor. My answer to such is, and always will be, "Take it or leave it." If they won't take it, there's heaps that must. As old Mr. Messenger used to say, "Bunker, my friend," or "Bunker, my old friend," sometimes, "Your remarks is true wisdom." Yes, Miss Kennedy, I will go with you, to show you the way.' He looked at his watch. 'Half-past four. I dare say it will take half an hour there and back—which with the last quarter of an hour's talk, we shall charge as an hour's time, which is half-a-crown. Thank you. An hour,' he added, with great feeling, 'an hour, like a pint of beer, cannot be divided. And on these easy terms, Miss Kennedy, you will find me always ready to work for you from sunrise to sunset, thinking of your interests even at meals, so as not to split an hour or waste time, and to save trouble in reckoning up.'

CHAPTER VII.

THE TRINITY ALMSHOUSE.

From Stepney Green to the Trinity Almshouse is not a long way; you have, in fact, little more than to pass through a short street and to cross the road. But the road itself is noteworthy: for, of all the roads which lead into London or out of it, this of Whitechapel is the broadest and the noblest by nature. Man, it is true, has done little to embellish it. There are no avenues of green and spreading lime and plane trees, as, one day, there shall be: there are no stately buildings, towers, spires, miracles of architecture; but only houses and shops which, whether small or big, are all alike mean, unlovely, and depressing. Yet, in spite of all, a noble road.

This road, which is the promenade, breathing-place, place of resort, place of gossip, place of amusement, and place of business for the greater part of East London, stretches all the way from Aldgate to Stratford, being called first the Whitechapel Road, and then the Mile End Road; then the Bow Road, and then the Stratford Road. Under the first name the road has acquired a reputation of the class called, by moralists, unenviable. The history of police-court records, under the general heading of Whitechapel Road, so many free fights, brave robberies, gallant murders, dauntless kickings, cudgellings, pummellings, pocket-pickings, shop-liftings, watch-snatchings, and assaults on constables, with such a brave display of disorderly drunks, that the road has come to be regarded with admiration as one of those Alsatian retreats, growing every day rarer, which are beyond and above the law. It is thought to be a place where manhood and personal bravery reign supreme. Yet the road is not worthy of this reputation: it has of late years become orderly; its present condition is dull and law-abiding, brilliant as the past has been, and whatever greatness may be in store for the future. Once out of Whitechapel, and within the respectable region of Mile End, the road has always been eminently respectable; and as regards dangers quite safe, ever since they built the bridge over the River Lea, which used now and again to have freshets, and, at such times, tried to drown harmless people in its ford. Since that bridge was built in the time of Edward I., it matters not for the freshets. There is not much in the Bow Road when the stranger gets there, in his journey along this great thoroughfare, for him to visit, except its almshouses, which are many; and the beautiful old church of Bow, standing in the middle of the road, crumbling slowly away in the East End fog, with its narrow strip of crowded churchyard. One hopes that before it has quite crumbled away some one will go and make a picture of it—an etching would be best. At Stratford the road divides, so that you may turn to the right and get to Barking, or to the left and get to Epping Forest. And all the way, for four miles, a broad and noble road, which must have been carved originally out of No Man's Land, in so generous a spirit is it laid out. Angela is now planting it with trees; beneath the trees she will set seats for those who wish to rest. Here and there she will erect drinking-fountains. Whitechapel Road, since her improvements begun, has been transformed; even the bacon shops are beginning to look a little less rusty; and the grocers are trying to live up to the green avenues.

Angela's imagination was fired by this road from the very first, when the Idle Apprentice took her into it as into a new and strange country. Here, for the first time, she realised the meaning of the universal curse, from which only herself and a few others are unnaturally exempted; and this only under heavy penalties and the necessity of finding out their own work for themselves, or it will be the worse for them. People think it better to choose their own work. That is a great mistake. You might just as well want to choose your own disease. In the West End, a good many folk do work—and work pretty hard some of them—who need not, unless they please; and a good many others work who must, whether they please or no; but somehow the forced labour is pushed into the background. We do not perceive its presence: people drive about in carriages, as if there were nothing to do; people lounge; people have leisure; people do not look pressed, or in a hurry, or task-mastered, or told to make bricks without straw.

Here, in the East End, on the other hand, there are no strollers. All day long the place is full of passengers hasting to and fro, pushing each other aside, with set and anxious faces, each driven by the invisible scourge of necessity which makes slaves of all mankind. Do you know that famous picture of the Israelites in Egypt? Upon the great block of stone, which the poor wretches are painfully dragging, while the cruel lash goads the weak and terrifies the strong, there sits one in authority. He regards the herd of slaves with eyes terrible from their stony gaze. What is it to him whether the feeble suffer and perish, so that the Pharaoh's will be done? The people of the East reminded Angela, who was an on-looker and had no work to do, of these builders of pyramids: they worked under a taskmaster as relentless as that stony-hearted captain or foreman of works. If the Israelites desisted, they were flogged back to work with cats of many tails: if our workmen desist, they are flogged back by starvation.

'Let us hope,' said Harry, to whom Angela imparted a portion of the above reflection and comparison,—'let us hope that the Pharaoh himself means well and is pitiful.' He spoke without his usual flippancy, so that perhaps his remark had some meaning, for himself.

All day long and all the year round there is a constant Fair going on in Whitechapel Road. It is held upon the broad pavement, which was benevolently intended, no doubt, for this purpose. Here are displayed all kinds of things; bits of second-hand furniture, such as the head of a wooden bed, whose griminess is perhaps exaggerated, in order that a purchaser may expect something extraordinarily cheap. Here are lids of pots and saucepans laid out, to show that in the warehouse, of which these things are specimens, will be found the principal parts of the utensils for sale; here are unexpected things, such as rows of skates, sold cheap in summer; light clothing in winter; workmen's tools of every kind, including, perhaps, the burglarious jemmy; second-hand books—a miscellaneous collection, establishing the fact that the readers of books in Whitechapel—a feeble and scanty folk—read nothing at all except sermons and meditations among the tombs; second-hand boots and shoes; cutlery; hats and caps; rat-traps and mouse-traps and birdcages; flowers and seeds; skittles; and frames for photographs. Cheap-jacks have their carts beside the pavement; and with strident voice proclaim the goodness of their wares, which include in this district bloaters and dried haddocks, as well as crockery. And one is amazed, seeing how the open-air Fair goes on, why the shops are kept open at all.

And always the same. It saddens one, I know not why, to sit beside a river and see the water flowing down with never a pause. It saddens one still more to watch the current of human life in this great thoroughfare and feel that, as it is now, so it was a generation ago, and so it will be a generation hence. The bees in the hive die, and are replaced by others exactly like them, and the honey-making goes on merrily still. So, in a great street, the waggons always go up and down; the passengers never cease; the shopboy is always behind the counter; the workgirl is always sewing; the workman is always carrying his tools as he goes to his work; there are always those who stay for half a pint, and always those who hurry on. In this endless drama, which repeats itself like a musical box, the *jeune premier* of to-day becomes to-morrow the lean and slippered pantaloon. The day after to-morrow he will have disappeared, gone to join the silent ones in the grim, unlovely cemetery belonging to the Tower Hamlets, which lies beyond Stepney, and is the reason why on Sundays the 'frequent funeral blackens all the road.'

'One can moralise,' said Harry one day, after they had been exchanging sentiments of enjoyable sadness, 'at this rate for ever. But it has all been done before.'

'Everything, I suppose,' replied Angela, 'has been done before. If it has not been done by me, it is new—to me. It does not make it any better for a man who has to work all the days of his life, and gets no enjoyment out of it, and lives ignobly and dies obscurely, that the same thing happens to most people.'

'We cannot help ourselves.' This time it was the Cabinet-maker who spoke to the Dressmaker. 'We belong to the crowd, and we must live with the crowd. You can't make much glory out of a mercenary lathe, nor out of a dressmaker's shop, can you, Miss Kennedy?'

It was by such reminders, one to the other, that conversations of the most delightful kind, full of speculations and comparisons were generally brought up short. When Angela remembered that she was talking to an artisan, she froze. When Harry reflected that it was a dressmaker to whom he was communicating bits of his inner soul, he checked himself. When, which happened every day, they forgot their disguises for a while, they talked quite freely, and very prettily communicated all sorts of thoughts, fancies, and opinions to each other; insomuch that once or twice a disagreeable feeling would cross the girl's mind that they were perhaps getting too near the line at which 'keeping company' begins; but he was a young workman of good taste, and he never presumed.

She was walking beside her guide, Mr. Bunker, and pondering over these things as she gazed down the broad road, and recollected the talk she had held in it; and now her heart was warm within her, because of the things she thought and had tried to say.

'Here we are, Miss,' said Mr. Bunker, stopping. 'Here's the Trinity Almshouse.'

She awoke from her dream. It is very odd to consider the strange thoughts which flash upon one in waking. Angela suddenly discovered that Mr. Bunker possessed a remarkable resemblance to a bear. His walk was something like one, with a swing of the shoulders, and his hands were big and his expression was hungry. Yes, he was exactly like a bear.

She observed that she was standing at a wicket-gate, and that over the gate was the effigy of a ship in full sail done in stone. Mr. Bunker opened the door, and led the way to the court within.

Then a great stillness fell upon the girl's spirit. Outside, the waggons, carts, and omnibuses thundered and rolled. You could hear them plainly enough; you could hear the tramp of a thousand feet. But the noise outside was only a contrast to the quiet within. A wall of brick with iron railings separated the tumult from the calm. It seemed as if, within that court, there was no noise at all, so sharp and sudden was the contrast.

She stood in an oblong court, separated from the road by the wall above-named. On either hand was a row of small houses, containing, apparently, four room seach. They were built of red brick, and were bright and clean. Every house had an iron tank in front for water; there was a pavement of flags along this row, and a grass lawn occupied the middle of the court. Upon the grass stood the statue of a benefactor, and at the end of the court was a chapel. It was a very little chapel, but was approached by a most enormous and disproportionate flight of stone steps, which might have been originally cut for a portal of St. Paul's Cathedral.

The steps were surmounted by a great doorway, which occupied the whole west front of the chapel. No one was moving about the place except an old lady, who was drawing water from her tank.

'Pretty place, ain't it?' asked Mr. Bunker.

'It seems peaceful and quiet,' said the girl.

'Place where you'd expect Pride, ain't it?' he went on scornfully. 'Oh! yes. Paupers and Pride go together, as is well known. Lowliness is for them who've got a bank and money in it. Oh, yes, of course. Gar! The Pride of an Inmate!'

He led the way, making a most impertinent echo with the heels of his boots. Angela observed, immediately, that there was another court beyond the first. In fact, it was larger; the houses were of stone, and of greater size; and it was if anything more solemnly quiet. It was possessed of silence.

Here there is another statue erected to the memory of the Founder, who, it is stated on the pedestal, died, being then 'Commander of a Shipp' in the East Indies, in the year 1686. The gallant captain is represented in the costume of the period. He wears a coat with many buttons, large cuffs, and full skirts; the coat is buttoned a good way below the waist, showing the fair doublet within, also provided with many buttons. He wears shoes with buckles, has a soft silk wrapper round his neck, and a sash to carry his sword. On his head there is an enormous wig, well adapted to serve the purpose for which Solar Topees were afterwards invented. In his right hand he carries a sextant, many sizes bigger than those in modern use, and at his feet dolphins sport. A grass lawn covers this court, as well as the other, and no voice or sound ever comes from any of the houses, whose occupants might well be all dead.

Mr. Bunker turned to the right, and presently rapped with his knuckles at a door. Then, without waiting for a reply, he turned the handle, and with a nod invited his companion to follow him.

It was a small but well-proportioned room, with low ceiling, furnished sufficiently. There were clean white curtains with rose-coloured ribbons. The window was open, and in it stood a pot of mignonette, now at its best. At the window sat, on one side, an old gentleman with silvery white hair and spectacles, who was reading, and on the other side a girl, with work on her lap, sewing.

'Now, Cap'n Sorensen,' said Mr. Bunker, without the formality of greeting, 'I've got you another chance. Take it or leave it, since you can afford to be particular. I can't; I'm not rich enough. Ha!' He snorted and looked about him with the contempt which a man who has a Banker naturally feels for one who hasn't and lives in an Almshouse.

'What is the chance?' asked the Inmate meekly, looking up. When he saw Angela in the doorway he rose and bowed, offering her a chair. Angela observed that he was a very tall old man, and that he had blue eyes and a rosy face—quite a young face it looked—and was gentle of speech and courteous in demeanour. 'Is the chance connected with this young lady, Mr. Bunker?'

'It is,' said the great man. 'Miss Kennedy, this is the young woman I told you of. This young lady'—he indicated Angela—'is setting herself up, in a genteel way, in the dressmaking line. She's taken one of my houses on the Green, and she wants hands to begin with. She comes here, Cap'n Sorensen, on my recommendation.'

'We are obliged to you, Mr. Bunker.'

The girl was standing, her work in her hands, looking at Angela, and a little terrified by the sight of so grand a person. The dressmakers of her experience were not young and beautiful; mostly they were pinched with years, troubles, and anxieties. When Angela began to notice her, she saw that the young work-girl, who seemed about nineteen years of age, was tall, rather too thin, and pretty. She did not look strong, but her cheeks were flushed with a delicate bloom; her eyes, like her father's, were blue; her hair was light and feathery, though she brushed it as straight as it would go. She was dressed, like most girls of her class, in a frock of sober black.

Angela took her by the hand. 'I am sure,' she said kindly, 'that we shall be friends.'

'Friends!' cried Mr. Bunker, aghast. 'Why, she's to be one of your girls. 'You *can't* be friends with your own girls.'

'Perhaps,' said the girl, blushing and abashed, 'you would like to see some of my work.' She spread out her work on the table.

'Fine weather here, Cap'n,' Mr. Bunker went on, striking an attitude of patronage, as if the sun was good indeed to shine on an Almshouse. 'Fine weather should make grateful hearts, especially in them as is provided for—having been improvident in their youth—with comfortable roofs to shelter them.'

'Grateful hearts, indeed, Mr. Bunker,' said the Captain, quietly.

'Mr. Bunker'—Angela turned upon him with an air of command, and pointed to the door—'you may go now. You have done all I wanted.'

Mr. Bunker turned very red. 'He could go!' Was he to be ordered about by every little dressmaker? 'He could go!'

'If the lady engages my daughter, Mr. Bunker,' said Captain Sorensen, 'I will try to find the five shillings next week.'

'Five shillings!' cried Angela. 'Why, I have just given him five shillings for his recommendation.'

Mr. Bunker did not explain that his practice was to get five shillings from both sides, but he retreated with as much dignity as could be expected.

He asked, outside, with shame, how it was that he allowed himself thus to be sat upon and ordered out of the house by a mere girl. Why had he not stood upon his dignity? To be told he might go, and before an Inmate—a common Pauper!

There is one consolation always open, thank Heaven, for the meanest amongst us poor worms of earth. We are gifted with imaginations; we can make the impossible an actual fact, and can with the eye of the mind make the unreal stand before us in the flesh. Therefore, when we are down-trodden, we may proceed, without the trouble and danger of turning (which has been known to bring total extinction upon a worm), to take revenge upon our enemy in imagination. Mr. Bunker, who was at this moment uncertain whether he hated Miss Kennedy more than he hated his nephew, went home glowing with the thought that but a few short months would elapse before he should be able to set his foot upon the former and crush her. Because, at the rate she was going on, she would not last more than that time. Then would he send in his bills, sue her, sell her up, and drive her out of the place stripped of the last farthing. 'He might go!' He, Bunker, was told that he might go! And in the presence of an Inmate! Then he thought of his nephew, and while he smote the pavement with the iron end of his umbrella, a cold dew appeared upon his nose, the place where inward agitation is frequently betrayed in this way, and he shivered, looking about him suddenly as if he was frightened. Yet, what harm was Harry Goslett likely to do him?

'What is your name, my dear?' asked Angela, softly, and without any inspection of the work on the table. She was wondering how this pretty fragile flower should be found in Whitechapel. Oh, ignorance of Newnham! For she might have reflected that the rarest and most delightful plants are found in the most savage places—there is beautiful botanising, one is told, in the Ural Mountains; and that the sun shines everywhere, even, as Mr. Bunker remarked, in an Almshouse; and that she herself had gathered in the ugliest ditches round Cambridge the sweetest flowering mosses, the tenderest campion, the loveliest little herbrobert.

'My name is Ellen,' replied the girl.

'I call her Nelly,' her father answered, 'and she is a good girl. Will you sit down, Miss Kennedy?'

Angela sat down and proceeded to business. She said, addressing the old man, but looking at the child, that she was setting up a dressmaker's shop; that she had hopes of support, even from the West End, where she had friends; that she was prepared to pay the proper wages, with certain other advantages, of which more would be said later on; and that, if Captain Sorensen approved, she would engage his daughter from that day.

'I have only been out as an improver as yet,' said Nelly. 'But if you will really try me as a dressmaker—oh, father, it is sixteen shillings a week!'

Angela's heart smote her. A poor sixteen shillings a week! And this girl was delighted at the chance of getting so much.

'What do you say, Captain Sorensen! Do you want references, as Mr. Bunker did? I am the granddaughter of a man who was born here and made—a little—money here, which he left to me. Will you let her come to me?'

'You are the first person,' said Captain Sorensen, 'who ever, in this place, where work is not so plentiful as hands, offered work as if taking it was a favour to you.'

'I want good girls—and nice girls,' said Angela. 'I want a house where we shall all be friends.'

The old sailor shook his head.

'There is no such house here,' he said sadly. 'It is "take it or leave it"—if you won't take it, others will. Make the poor girls your friends, Miss Kennedy? You look and talk like a lady born and bred, and I fear you will be put upon. Make friends of your servants? Why, Mr. Bunker will tell you that Whitechapel does not carry on business that way. But it is good of you to try, and I am sure you will not scold and drive like the rest.'

'You offended Mr. Bunker, I learn, by refusing a place which he offered,' said Angela.

'Yes; God knows if I did right. We are desperately poor, else we should not be here. That you may see for yourself. Yet, my blood boiled when I heard the character of the man whom my Nelly was to serve. I could not let her go. She is all I have, Miss Kennedy'—the old man drew the girl towards him and held her, his arm round her waist. 'If you will take her and treat her kindly, you will have—it isn't worth anything, perhaps—the gratitude of one old man in this world—soon in the next.'

'Trust your daughter with me, Captain Sorensen,' Angela replied, with tears in her eyes.

'Everybody round here is poor,' he went on. 'That makes people hard-hearted; there are too many people in trade, and that makes them mean; they are all trying to undersell each other, and that makes them full of tricks and cheating. They treat the workgirls worst because they cannot stand up for themselves. The long hours, and the bad food, and the poisonous air—think a little of your girls, Miss Kennedy. But you will—you will.'

'I will, Captain Sorensen.'

'It seems worse to us old sailors,' he went on. 'We have had a hardish life, but it has been in open air. Old sailors haven't had to cheat and lie for a living. And we haven't been brought up to think of girls turning night into day, and working sixteen hours on end at twopence an hour. It is hard to think of my poor girl——' he stopped and clenched his fist. 'Better to starve than to work in such a mill!' He was thinking of the place which he had refused.

'Let us try each other, Nelly,' she said, kissing her on the forehead.

The Captain took his hat to escort her as far as the gate.

'A quiet place,' he said, looking round the little court, 'and a happy place for the last days of improvident old men like me. Yet some of us grumble. Forgive my plain speech about the work.'

'There is nothing to forgive, indeed, Captain Sorensen. Will you let me call upon you, sometimes?'

She gave him her hand. He bowed over it with the courtesy of a captain on his own quarter-deck. When she turned away she saw that a tear was standing in his eyes.

'Father!' cried Nelly, rushing into his arms, 'did you ever see anybody like her? Oh! oh! do you think I really shall do for her?'

'You will do your best, my dear. It is a long time, I think, since I have seen and spoken with anyone like that. In the old days I've had passengers to Calcutta like her; but none more so, Nelly—no, never one more so.'

'You couldn't, father.' His daughter wanted no explanation of this mysterious qualification. 'You couldn't. She is a lady, father;' she looked up and laughed.

'It's a funny thing for a real lady to open a dressmaker's shop on Stepney Green, isn't it?'

Remark, if you please, that this girl had never once before, in all her life, conversed with a lady, using the word in the prejudiced and narrow sense peculiar to the West End. Yet, she discovered instantly the truth. Whence this instinct? It is a world full of strange and wonderful things; the more questions we ask, the more we may; and the more things we consider, the more incomprehensible does the sum of things appear. Inquiring reader, I do not know how Nelly divined that her visitor was a lady.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHAT HE GOT BY IT.

A DRESSMAKER'S shop without a dressmaker to manage it would be, Angela considered, in some perplexity, like a ship without a steersman. She therefore awaited with some impatience the promised visit of Rebekah Hermitage, whom she was to 'get cheap,' according to Bunker, on account of her Sabbatarian views.

She came in the evening, while Angela was walking on the Green with the sprightly Cabinet-maker. It was sunset, and Angela had been remarking to her companion, with a sort of irrational surprise, that the phenomena coincident with the close of the day are just as brilliantly coloured and lavishly displayed for the squalid East as for the luxurious West. Perhaps, indeed, there are not many places in London where sunset does produce such good effects as at Stepney Green. The narrow strip, so called, in shape resembles too nearly a closed umbrella or a thickish walking-stick; but there are trees in it, and beds of flowers, and seats for those who wish to sit, and walks for those who wish to walk. And the better houses of the Green—Bormalack's was on the west, or dingy side—are on the east, and face the setting sun. They are of a good age, at least a hundred and fifty years old; they are built of a warm red brick, and some have doors ornamented with the old-fashioned shell, and all have an appearance of solid respectability, which makes the rest of Stepney proud of them. Here, in former days, dwelt the aristocracy of the parish; and on this side was the house taken by Angela for her dressmaking institution, the house in which her grandfather was born. The reason why the sunsets are more splendid and the sunrises brighter at Stepney than at the opposite end of London, is, that the sun sets behind the great bank of cloud which for ever lies over London town. This lends his departure to the happy dwellers of the East strange and wonderful effects. Now, when he rises, it is naturally in the East, where there is no cloud of smoke to hide the brightness of his face.

The Green this evening was crowded: it is not so fashionable a promenade as Whitechapel Road, but, on the other hand, it possesses the charm of comparative quiet. There is no noise of vehicles, but only the shouting of children, the loud laughter of some *gaillard* 'prentice, the coy giggle of the young lady to whom he has imparted his latest merry jape, the loud whispers of ladies who are exchanging confidences about their complaints and the complaints of their friends, and the musical laugh of girls. The old people had all crept home; the mothers were at home putting their children to bed; the fathers were mostly engaged with the evening pipe, which demands a chair within four walls and a glass of something; the Green was given up to youth; and youth was principally given up to love-making.

'In Arcadia,' said Harry, 'every nymph is wooed, and every swain——'

He was interrupted by the arrival of his uncle, who pushed his way through the crowd with his usual important bustle, followed by a 'young person.'

'I looked for you at Mrs. Bormalack's,' he said to Angela, reproachfully, 'and here you are—with this young man, as usual. As if my time was no object to you!'

'Why not with this young man, Mr. Bunker?' asked Angela.

He did not explain his reasons for objecting to her companion, but proceeded to introduce his companion.

'Here she is, Miss Kennedy,' he said. 'This is Rebekah Hermitage; I've brought her with me to prevent mistakes. You may take her on my recommendation. Nobody, in the neighbourhood of Stepney, wants a better recommendation than mine. One of Bunker's, they say, and they ask no more.'

'What a beautiful, what an enviable reputation!' murmured his nephew. 'Oh, that I were one of Bunker's!'

Mr. Bunker glared at him, but answered not; never, within his present experience, had he found himself at a loss to give indignation words. On occasion, he had been known to swear 'into shudders' the immortal gods who heard him. To swear at this nephew, however, this careless sniggering youth, who looked and talked like a 'swell,' would, he felt, be more than useless. The boy would only snigger more. He would have liked knocking him down, but there were obvious reasons why this was not to be seriously contemplated.

He turned to the girl who had come with him.

'Rebekah,' he said with condescension, 'you may speak up; I told your father I would stand by you, and I will.'

'Do not, at least,' said Angela, in her stateliest manner, 'begin by making Miss Hermitage suppose she will want your support.'

She saw before her a girl of about two- or three-and-twenty years of age. She was short of stature and sturdy. Her complexion was dark, with black hair and dark eyes, and these were bright. A firm mouth and square chin gave her a pugnacious appearance. In fact, she had been fighting all her life, more desperately even than the other girls about her, because she was heavily handicapped by the awkwardness of her religion.

'Mr. Bunker,' said this young person, who certainly did not look as if she wanted any backing up, 'tells me you want a forewoman.'

'You want a forewoman,' echoed the agent, as if interpreting for her.

'Yes, I do,' Angela replied. 'I know, to begin with, all about your religious opinions.'

'She knows,' said the agent, standing between the two parties, as if retained for the interests of both,—'she knows, already, your religious opinions.'

'Very well, Miss.' Rebekah looked disappointed at losing a chance of expounding them. 'Then, I can only say, I can never give way in the matter of truth.'

'In truth,' said the agent, 'she's as obstinate as a pig.'

'I do not expect it,' replied Angela, feeling that the half-a-crown-an-hour man was really a stupendous nuisance.

'She does not expect it,' echoed Mr. Bunker, turning to Rebekah. 'What did I tell you?—now you see the effect of my recommendations.'

'Take it off the wages,' said Rebekah, with an obvious effort, which showed how vital was the importance of the pay. 'Take it off the wages, if you like; and, of course, I can't expect to labour for five days and be paid for six; but on the Saturday, which is the Sabbath day, I do no work therein, neither I, nor my manservant, nor my maidservant, nor my ox, nor my ass.'

'Neither her manservant, nor her maidservant, nor her ox, nor her ass,' repeated the agent, solemnly.

'There is the Sunday, however,' said Angela.

'What have you got to say about Sunday, now?' asked Mr. Bunker, with a change of front.'

'Of all the days that's in the week,' interpolated the sprightly one, 'I dearly love but one day—and that's the day——'

Rebekah, impatient of this frivolity, stopped it at once.

'I do as little as I can,' she said, 'on Sunday, because of the weaker brethren. The Sunday we keep as a holiday.'

'Well——' Angela began rather to envy this young woman, who was a clear gainer of a whole day by her religion; 'well, Miss Hermitage, will you come to me on trial? Thank you, we can settle about deductions afterwards, if you please. And if you will come to-morrow—that is right. Now, if you please to take a turn with me, we will talk things over together; good night, Mr. Bunker!'

She took the girl's arm and led her away, being anxious to get Bunker out of sight. The aspect of this agent annoyed and irritated her almost beyond endurance; so she left him with his nephew.

'One of Bunker's!' Harry repeated softly.

'You here!' growled the uncle; 'dangling after a girl when you ought to be at work! How long, I should like to know, are we hard-working Stepney folk to be troubled with an idle, good-for-nothing vagabond? Eh, sir? How long? And don't suppose that I mean to do anything for you when your money is all gone. Do you hear, sir? do you hear?'

'I hear, my uncle!' As usual, the young man laughed; he sat upon the arm of a garden seat, with his hands in his pockets, and laughed an insolent, exasperating laugh. Now, Mr. Bunker in all his life had never seen the least necessity or occasion for laughing at anything at all, far less at himself. Nor, hitherto, had anyone dared to laugh at him.

'Sniggerin' peacock!' added Mr. Bunker, fiercely, rattling a bunch of keys in his pocket.

Harry laughed again, with more *abandon*. This uncle of his, who regarded him with so much dislike, seemed a very humorous person.

'Connection by marriage,' he said—'there is one question I have very much wished to put to you. When you traded me away, now three-and-twenty years ago, or thereabouts—you remember the circumstances, I dare say, better than I can be expected to do—*what did you get for me?*'

Then Bunker's colour changed, his cheeks became quite white. Harry thought it was the effect of wrath, and went on.

'Half-a-crown an hour, of course, during the negotiations, which I dare say took a week—that we understand; but what else? come, my uncle, what else did you get?'

It was too dark for the young man to perceive the full effect of this question—the sudden change of colour escaped his notice; but he observed a strange and angry light in his uncle's eyes, and he saw that he opened his mouth once or twice as if to speak, but shut his lips again without saying a word; and Harry was greatly surprised to see his uncle presently turn on his heel and walk straight away.

'That question seems to be a facer: it must be repeated whenever the good old man becomes offensive. I wonder what he *did* get for me?'

As for Mr. Bunker, he retired to his own house in Beaumont Square, walking with quick step and hanging head. He let himself in with his latch-key, and turned into his office, which, of course, was the first room of the ground-floor.

It was quite dark now, save for the faint light from the street gas, but Mr. Bunker did not want any light.

He sat down and rested his face on his hands, with a heavy sigh. The house was empty, because his housekeeper and only servant was out. He sat without moving for half an hour or so; then he lifted his head, and looked about him—he had forgotten where he was and why he came there—and he shuddered.

Then he hastily lit a candle, and went upstairs to his own bedroom. The room had one piece of furniture, not always found in bedrooms: it was a good-sized fireproof safe, which stood in the corner. Mr. Bunker placed his candle on the safe, and stooping down began to grope about with his keys for the lock. It took some time to find the keyhole; when the safe was opened, it took longer time to find the papers which he wanted, for these were at the very back of all. Presently, however, he lifted his head, with a bundle in his hand.

Now, if we are obliged to account for everything, which ought not to be expected, and is more than one asks of scientific men, I should account for what followed by remarking that the blood is apt to get into the brains of people, especially elderly people, and above all, stout, elderly people, when they stoop for any length of time; and that history records many remarkable manifestations of the spirit world which have followed a posture of stooping too prolonged. It produces, in fact, a condition of brain beloved by ghosts. There is the leading case of the man at Cambridge who, after stooping for a book, saw the ghost of his own bed-maker at a time when he knew her to be in the bosom of her family eating up his bread-and-butter and drinking his tea. Rats have been seen by others—troops of rats—as many rats as followed the Piper, where there were no rats; and there is even the recorded case of a man who saw the ghost of himself, which prognosticated dissolution, and, in fact, killed him exactly fifty-two years after the event. So that, really, there is nothing at all unusual in the fact that Mr. Bunker saw something, when he lifted his head. The remarkable thing is that he saw the very person of whom he had been thinking ever since his nephew's question—no other than his deceased wife's sister; he had never loved her at all, or in the least desired to marry her, which makes the case more remarkable still; and she stood before him, just as if she was alive, and gazed upon him with reproachful eyes.

He behaved with great coolness and presence of mind. Few men would have shown more bravery. He just dropped the candle out of one hand and the papers out of the other, and fell back upon the bed with a white face and quivering lips. Some men would have run—he did not; in fact, he could not. His knees instinctively knew that it is useless to run from a ghost, and refused to aid him.

'Caroline!' he groaned.

As he spoke the figure vanished, making no sign and saying no word. After a while, seeing that the ghost came no more, Mr. Bunker pulled himself together. He picked up the papers and the candle, and went slowly downstairs again, turning every moment to see if his sister-in-law came too. But she did not, and he went to the bright gas-lit back parlour, where his supper was spread.

After supper he mixed a glass of brandy-and-water, stiff. After drinking this, he mixed another, and began to smoke a pipe while he turned over the papers.

'He can't have meant anything,' he said. 'What should the boy know? What did the gentleman know? nothing. What does anybody know? nothing. There's nobody left. The will was witnessed by Mr. Messenger and Bob Coppin. Well, one of them is dead, and as for the other'—he paused and winced—'as for the other, it is five-and-twenty years since he was heard of, so he's dead too; of course, he's dead.'

Then he remembered the spectre, and he trembled. For suppose Caroline meant coming often; this would be particularly disagreeable. He remembered a certain scene where, three-and-twenty years before, he had stood at a bedside while a dying woman spoke to him; the words she said were few, and he remembered them quite well, even after so long a time, which shows his real goodness of heart.

'You are a hard man, Bunker, and you think too much of money, and you were not kind to your wife. But I'm going too, and there is nobody left to trust my boy to, except you. Be good to him, Bunker, for your dead wife's sake.'

He remembered, too, how he had promised to be good to the boy, not meaning much by the words, perhaps, but softened by the presence of death.

'It is not as if the boy was penniless,' she said; 'his houses will pay you for his keep, and to spare. You will lose nothing by him. Promise me, again.'

He remembered that he had promised a second time that he would be good to the boy; and he remembered, too, how the promise seemed then to involve great expense in canes.

'If you break the solemn promise,' she said, with feminine prescience, 'I warn you that he shall do you an injury when he grows up. Remember that.'

He did remember it now, though he had quite forgotten this detail a long while ago. The boy had returned; he was grown up; he could do him an injury, *if he knew how.* Because he only had to ask his uncle for an account of those houses. Fortunately, he did not know. Happily, there was no one to tell him. With his third tumbler Mr. Bunker became quite confident and reassured; with his fourth he felt inclined to be merry, and to slap himself on the back for wide-awakedness of the rarest kind. With his fifth he resolved to go upstairs and tell Caroline that unless she went and told her son, no one would. He carried part of this resolution into effect; that is to say, he went to his bedroom, and his housekeeper, unobserved herself, had the pleasure of seeing her master ascending the stairs on his hands and feet, a method which offers great advantages to a gentleman who has had five tumblers of brandy-and-water.

When he got there, and had quite succeeded in shutting the door—not always so easy a thing as it looks—Caroline was no longer visible. He could not find her anywhere, though he went all round the room twice, on all-fours, in search of her.

The really remarkable part of this story is, that she had never paid a visit to her son at all.

Meantime, the strollers on the Green were grown few. Most of them had gone home; but the air was warm, and there were still some who lingered. Among them were Angela and the girl who was to be her forewoman.

When Rebekah found that her employer was not apparently of those who try to cheat, or bully, or cajole her subordinates, she lost her combative air, and consented to talk about things. She gave Angela a great deal of information about the prospects of her venture, which were gloomy, she thought, as the competition was so severe. She also gave her an insight into details of a practical nature concerning the conduct of a dress-makery, into which we need not follow her.

Angela discovered before they parted that she had two sides to her character; on one side she was a practical and practised woman of work and business, on the other she was a religious fanatic.

'We wait,' she said, 'for the world to come round to us. Oh! I know we are but a little body and a poor folk. Father is almost alone; but what a thing it is to be the appointed keepers of the truth! Come and hear us, Miss Kennedy. Father always converts anyone who will listen to him. Oh, do listen!'

Then she, too, went away, and Angela was left alone in the quiet place. Presently she became aware that Harry was standing beside her.

'Don't let us go home yet,' he said; 'Bormalack's is desperately dull—you can picture it all to yourself. The Professor has got a new trick; Daniel Fagg is looking as if he had met with more disappointment; her ladyship is short of temper, because the Case is getting on so slowly; and Josephus is sighing over a long pipe; and Mr. Maliphant is chuckling to himself in the corner. On the whole, it is better here. Shall we remain a little longer in the open air, Miss Kennedy?'

He looked dangerous. Angela, who had been disposed to be expansive, froze.

'We will have one more turn, if you please, Mr. Goslett.' She added stiffly, 'Only remember—so long as you don't think of "keeping company."'

'I understand, perfectly, Miss Kennedy. "Society" is a better word than "company;" let us keep that, and make a new departure for Stepney Green.'

CHAPTER IX.

THE DAY BEFORE THE FIRST.

Mr. Bunker, *en bon chrétien*, dissembled his wrath, and continued his good work of furnishing and arranging the house for Angela, insomuch that before many days the place was completely ready for opening.

In the meantime Miss Kennedy was away—she went away on business—and Bormalack's was dull without her. Harry found some consolation in superintending some of the work for her house, and in working at a grand cabinet which he designed for her: it was to be a miracle of wood-carving; he would throw into the work all the resources of his art and all his genius. When she came back, after the absence of a week, she looked full of business and of care. Harry thought it must be money worries, and began to curse Bunker's long bill; but she was gracious to him in her queenly way. Moreover, she assured him that all was going on well with her, better than she could have hoped. The evening before the 'Stepney Dressmakers' Association' was to open its doors, they all gathered together in the newly furnished house for a final inspection—Angela, her two *aides* Rebekah and Nelly, and the young man against whose companionship Mr. Bunker had warned her in vain. The house was large, with rooms on either side the door. These were showrooms and workrooms. The first floor Angela reserved for her own purposes, and she was mysterious about them.

At the back of the house stretched a long and ample garden. Angela had the whole of it covered with asphalte; the beds of flowers or lawns were all covered over. At the end she had caused to be built a large room of glass, the object of which she had not yet disclosed.

As regards the appointments of the house, she had taken one precaution—Rebekah superintended them. Mr. Bunker, therefore, was fain to restrict his enthusiasm, and could not charge more than twenty or thirty per cent. above the market value for the things. But Rebekah, though she faithfully carried out her instructions, could not but feel disappointed at the lavish scale in which things were ordered and paid for. The showrooms were as fine as if the place were Regent Street; the workrooms were looked after with as much care for ventilation as if, Mr. Bunker said, workgirls were countesses.

'It is too good,' Rebekah expostulated, 'much too good for us. It will only make other girls discontented.'

'I want to make them discontented,' Angela replied. 'Unless they are discontented, there will be no improvement. Think, Rebekah, what it is that lifts men out of the level of the beasts. We find out that there are better things, and we are fighting our way upwards. That is the mystery of Discontent—and perhaps of Pain, as well.'

'Ah!' Rebekah saw that this was not a practical answer. 'But you don't know, yet, the competition of the East End, and the straits we are put to. It is not as at the West End.'

The golden West is ever the Land of Promise. No need to undeceive: let her go on in the belief that the three thousand girls who wait and work about Regent Street and the great shops are everywhere treated generously, and paid above the market value of their services. I make no doubt, myself, that many a great West End mercer sits down when Christmas warms his heart, in his mansion at Finchley, Campden Hill, FitzJohn's Avenue, or Stoke Newington, and writes great cheques as gifts to the uncomplaining girls who build up his income.

'She would learn soon,' said Rebekah, hoping that the money would last out till the ship was fairly launched.

She was not suspicious, but there was something 'funny,' as Nelly said, in a girl of Miss Kennedy's stamp coming among them. Why did she choose Stepney Green? Surely, Bond Street or Regent Street would be better fitted for a lady of her manners. How would customers be received and orders be taken? By herself, or by this young lady, who would certainly treat the ladies of Stepney with little of that deferential courtesy which they expected of these dressmakers? For, as you may have remarked, the lower you descend, as well as the higher you climb, the more deference do the ladies receive at the hands of their tender folk. No duchess sweeps into a milliner's showroom with more dignity than her humble sister at Clare Market on a Saturday evening displays when she accepts the invitation of the butcher to rally up, ladies, and selects her Sunday's piece of beef. The Ladies of Stepney and the Mile End Road, thought Rebekah, look for attention. Would Miss Kennedy give it to them? If Miss Kennedy herself did not attend to the showroom, what would she do?

On this evening, after they had walked over the whole house, visited the asphalted garden, and looked into the great glass-room, Angela unfolded her plans.

It was in the workroom. She stood at the head of the table, looking about her with an air of pride and anxiety. It was her own design—her own scheme; small as it was, compared with that other vast project, she was anxious about it. It *had* to succeed; it *must* succeed.

All its success, she thought, depended upon that sturdy little fanatical Seventh-Day young person. It was she who was to rule the place and be the practical dressmaker. And now she was to be told.

'Now,' said Angela, with some hesitation, 'the time has come for an explanation of the way we shall work. First of all, will you, Rebekah, undertake the management and control of the business?'

'I, Miss Kennedy? But what is your department?'

'I will undertake the management of the girls—' she stopped and blushed—'*out of their work-time.*'

At this extraordinary announcement the two girls looked blankly at their employer.

'You do not quite understand,' Angela went on. 'Wait a little. Do you consent, Rebekah?'

The girl's eyes flashed and her cheeks became aflame. Then she thought of the sudden promotion of Joseph in Egypt, and she took confidence. Perhaps she really was equal to the place; perhaps she had actually merited the distinction.

'Very well, then,' Miss Kennedy went on, as if it was the most natural thing in the world that a humble workwoman should be suddenly raised to the proud post of manager. 'Very well: that is settled. You, Nelly, will try to take care of the workroom when Rebekah is not there. As regards the accounts——'

'I can keep them, too,' said Rebekah. 'I shall work—on Sundays,' she added with a blush.

Miss Kennedy then proceeded to expound her views as regards the management of her establishment.

'The girls will be here at nine,' she said.

Rebekah nodded. There could be no objection to that.

'They will work from nine till eleven.' Rebekah started. 'Yes, I know what I mean. The long hours of sitting and bending the back over work are just as bad a thing for girls of fifteen or so as could be invented. At eleven, therefore, we shall have, all of us, half an hour's exercise.'

Exercise? Exercise in a dressmaker's shop? Was Miss Kennedy in her senses?

'Exercise. You see that asphalte. Surely some of you can guess what it is for?' She looked at Harry.

'Skittles?' he suggested.

'No. Lawn tennis. Well! why not?'

'What is lawn tennis?' asked Nelly.

'A game, my dear; and you shall learn it.'

'I never play games,' said Rebekah. 'A serious person has no room in her life for games.'

'Then call it exercise, and you will be able to play it without wounding your conscience.' This was Harry's remark. 'Why not, indeed, Miss Kennedy? The game of lawn tennis, Nelly,' he went on to explain, 'is greatly in vogue among the bloated aristocracy, as my cousin Dick will tell you. That it should descend to you and me and the likes of us is nothing less than a social revolution.'

Nelly smiled, but she only half understood this kind of language. A man who laughed at things, and talked of things as if they were meant to be laughed over, was a creature she had never before met with. My friends, lay this to heart, and ponder. It is not until a certain standard of cultivation is reached that people do laugh at things. They only began in the last century, and then only in a few *salons*. When all the world laughs, the perfection of humanity will have been reached, and the comedy will have been played out.

'It is a beautiful game,' said Angela, meaning Lawn Tennis, not the Comedy of Humanity. 'It requires a great deal of skill and exercises a vast quantity of muscles; and it costs nothing. Asphalte makes a perfect court, as I know very well.' She blushed, because she was thinking of the Newnham courts. 'We shall be able to play there, whenever it does not rain. When it does, there is the glass house.'

'What are you going to do in the glass house?' asked Harry; 'throw stones at other people's windows? That is said to be very good exercise.'

'I am going to set up a gymnasium for the girls.'

Rebekah stared, but said nothing. This was revolutionary, indeed.

'If they please, the girls can bring their friends; we will have a course of gymnastics as well as a school for lawn tennis. You see, Mr. Goslett, that I have not forgotten what you said once.'

'What was that, Miss Kennedy? It is very good of you to remember anything that I have said. Do you mean that I once, accidentally, said a thing worth hearing?'

'Yes; you said that money was not wanted here so much as work. That is what I remembered. If you can afford it, you may work with us, for there is a great deal to do.'

'I can afford it for a time.'

'We shall work again from half-past eleven until one. Then we shall stop for dinner.'

'They bring their own dinner, said Rebekah. 'It takes them five minutes to eat it. You will have to give them tea.'

'No; I shall give them dinner too. And because growing girls are dainty and sometimes cannot fancy things, I think a good way will be for each of them, even the youngest, to take turns in ordering the dinner and seeing it prepared.'

Rebekah groaned. What profits could stand up against such lavish expenditure as this?

'After an hour for dinner we shall go to work again. I have thought a good deal about the afternoon, which is the most tedious part of the day, and I think the best thing will be to have reading aloud.'

'Who is to read?' cried Rebekah.

'We shall find somebody or other. Tea at five, and work from six to seven. That is my programme.'

'Then, Miss Kennedy,' cried her forewoman, 'you will be a ruined woman in a year.'

'No'—she shook her head with her gracious smile—'no, I hope not. And I think you will find that we shall be very far from ruined. Have a little faith. What do you think, Nelly?'

'Oh, I think it beautiful!' she replied, with a gaze of soft worship in her limpid eyes. 'It is so beautiful that it must be a dream, and cannot last.'

'What do you say, Mr. Goslett?'

'I say that cabinet-making ought to be conducted in the same liberal spirit. But I am afraid it won't pay.'

Then Miss Kennedy took them to the room on the first floor. The room at the back was fitted as a dining-room, quite simply, with a dozen chairs and a long table. Plates, cups, and things were ranged upon shelves as if in a kitchen.

She led them to the front room. When her hand was on the lock she turned and smiled, and held up her finger as if to prepare them for a surprise.

The floor was painted and bare of carpet; the windows were dressed with pretty curtains. There were sconces on the walls for candles; in the recess stood her piano; and for chairs there were two or three rout seats ranged along the wall.

'What is this?' asked Rebekah.

'My dear, girls want play as well as work. The more innocent play they get, the better for them. This is a room where we shall play all sorts of things: sometimes we shall dance; sometimes we shall act; sometimes we shall sing; sometimes we shall read poetry or tales; sometimes we shall romp; the girls shall bring their friends here as well as to the gymnasium and the lawn tennis, if they please.'

'And who is to pay for all this?' asked Rebekah.

'My friends,' said Angela, colouring, because this was a crisis, and to be suspected at such a point would have been fatal,—'my friends, I have to make a confession to you. I have worked out the design by myself. I saw how the girls in our workshops toil for long hours and little pay. The great shops, whose partners are very rich men, treat them no better than do the poor traders whose living has to be got by scraping it off their wages. Now, I thought that if we were to start a shop in which there was to be no mistress, but to be self-governed, and to share the proceeds among them all in due order and with regard to skill and industry, we might adjust our own hours for the general good.

This kind of shop has been tried by men, but I think it has never succeeded, because they wanted the capital to start it with. What could we three girls have done with nothing but our own hands to help us? So I wrote to a young lady who has much money. Yes, Mr. Goslett, I wrote to that Miss Messenger of whom we have so often talked.'

'Miss Messenger!' Rebekah gasped; 'she who owns the Great Brewery?'

'The same. She has taken up our Cause. It is she who finds the funds to start us, just as well as if we had capital. She gives us the rent for a year, the furniture, the glass house—everything, even this piano. I have a letter from her in my pocket.' She took it out and read it. 'Miss Messenger begs to thank Miss Kennedy for her report of the progress made in her scheme. She quite approves of the engagements made, particularly those of Rebekah Hermitage and Nelly Sorensen. She hopes, before long, to visit the house herself and make their acquaintance. Meanwhile, she will employ the house for all such things as she requires, and begs Miss Kennedy to convey to Miss Hermitage the first order for the workshop.' This gracious letter was accompanied by a long list of things, at sight of which the forewoman's eyes glittered with joy.

'Oh, it is a splendid order!' she said. 'May we tell everybody about this Miss Messenger?'

'I think,' Angela replied, considering carefully, 'that it would be better not. Let people only know that we have started, that we are a body of workwomen governing ourselves and working for ourselves. The rest is for our private information.'

'While you are about it,' said Harry, 'you might persuade Miss Messenger to start the Palace of Delight and the College of Art.'

'Do you think she would?' asked Angela. 'Do you really think it would be any use at all?'

'Did she haggle about your Co-operative Association?'

'No, not at all. She quite agreed with me from the beginning.

'Then, try her for the Palace. See, Miss Kennedy'—the young man had become quite earnest and eager over the Palace—'it is only a question of money. If Miss Messenger wants to do a thing unparalleled among the deeds of rich men, let her build the Palace of Delight. If I were she, I should tremble for fear some other person with money got to hear of the idea, and should step in before her. Of course, the grand thing in these cases is to be the first.'

'What is a Palace of Delight?' asked Nelly.

'Truly wonderful it is,' said Harry, 'to think how monotonous are the gifts and bequests of rich men. Schools, churches, almshouses, hospitals—that is all; that is their monotonous round. Now and again, a man like Peabody remembers that men want houses to live in, not hovels! or a good woman remembers that they want sound and wholesome food, and builds a market; but as a rule, schools, churches, almshouses, hospitals. Look at the lack of originality. Miss Kennedy, go and see this rich person; ask her if she wants to do the grandest thing ever done for men; ask her if she will, as a new and startling point of departure, remember that men want joy. If she will ask me, I will deliver a lecture on the necessity of pleasure, the desirableness of pleasure, the beauty of pleasure.'

'A Palace of Delight!' Rebekah shook her head. 'Do you know that half the people never go to church?'

'When we have got the Palace,' said Harry, 'they will go to church, because religion is a plant that flourishes best where life is happiest. It will spring up among us, then, as luxuriantly as the wild honeysuckle. Who are the most religious people in the world, Miss Hermitage?'

'They are the worshippers in Red Man's Lane, and they are called the Seventh-Day Independents.'

The worst of the Socratic method of argument is that, when the wrong answer is given, the whole thing comes to grief. Now, Harry wanted her to say that the people who go most to church are the wealthy classes. Rebekah did not say so, because she knew nothing of the wealthy classes; and in her own circle of sectarian enthusiasts nobody had any money at all.

CHAPTER X.

THE GREAT DAVENANT CASE.

OH! you obstinate old man! Oh! you lazy old man!'

It was the high-pitched voice of her ladyship in reediest tones, and the time was eleven o'clock in the forenoon, when, as a rule, she was engaged in some needlework for herself, or assisting Mrs. Bormalack with the pudding, in a friendly way, while her husband continued the statement of the Case, left alone in the enjoyment of the sitting-room—and his title.

'You lazy old man!'

The words were overheard by Harry Goslett. He had been working at his miraculous Cabinet, and was now, following the example of Miss Kennedy's workgirls, 'knocking off' for half an hour, and thinking of some excuse for passing the rest of the morning with that young lady. He stood in the doorway, looking across the Green to the sacred windows of the Dressmakers' Association. Behind them at this moment were sitting, he knew, the Queen of the Mystery, with that most beauteous nymph, the matchless Nelly, fair and lovely to look upon; and with her, too, Rebekah the downright, herself a Mystery, and half-a-dozen more, some of them, perhaps, beautiful. Alas! in working hours these doors were closed. Perhaps, he thought, when the Cabinet was finished he might make some play by carrying it backwards and forwards, measuring, fitting, altering.

'You lazy, sinful, sleepy old man!'

A voice was heard feebly remonstrating.

'Oh! oh! oh!' she cried again in accents that rose higher and higher, 'we have come all the way from America to prove our Case. There's four months gone out of six—oh! oh! and you with your feet upon a chair—oh! oh! do you think you are back in Canaan City?'

'Clara Martha,' replied his lordship, in clear and distinct tones,—the window was wide open, so that the words floated out upon the summer air, and struck gently upon Harry's ear,—'Clara Martha, I wish I was—it is now holiday time and the boys are out in the woods. And the schoolroom—' he stopped, sighed deeply, and yawned—'it was very peaceful.'

She groaned in sheer despair.

'He is but a Carpenter,' she said, 'he grovels in the shavings, he wallows in the sawdust. Fie upon him! This man a British Peer? Oh? shame—shame!' Harry pictured the quivering shoulders and the finger of reproach. 'Oh! oh! He is not worthy to wear a coronet. Give him a chunk of wood to whittle, and a knife and a chair in the shade, and somethin' to rest his feet upon. That's all he wants, though Queen Victoria and all the angels was callin' for him across the ocean to take his seat in the House of Lords. Shame on him! Shame upon him!'

These taunts, apparently, had no effect. His lordship was understood by the listener to say something disrespectful of the Upper House, and to express regret at having exchanged his humble but contented position of school teacher and his breakfasts, where a man could look around him and see hot rolls and muffins and huckleberry pies, for the splendour of a title, with the meagre fare of London and the hard work of drawing up a Case.

'I *will* rouse him!' she cried, as she executed some movement, the nature of which could only be guessed by the young man outside. The windows, it is true, were open, but one's eyes cannot go outside to look in without the rest of the head and body going too. Whatever it was that she did, his lordship apparently sprang into the air with a loud cry, and, if sound means anything, ran hastily round the table, followed by his illustrious consort.

The listener says and always maintains—'Hairpin.' Those who consider her ladyship incapable of behaviour which might appear undignified reject that interpretation. Moral, not physical, were, according to these thinkers, the means of awakening adopted by Lady Davenant. Even the officers of the Salvation Army, they say, do not use hairpins.

'In the name of common humanity,' said Harry to himself, 'one must interfere.' He knocked at the door, and allowed time for the restoration of dignity and the smoothing of ruffled plumes.

He found his lordship seated, it is true, but *in the wrong chair*, and his whole frame was trembling with excitement, terror, or some other strong emotion, while the effort he was making to appear calm and composed caused his head to nod and his cheeks to shake. Never was a member of the Upper House placed in a more uncomfortable position. As for her ladyship, she was standing bolt upright at the other side of the room at the window. There was a gleam in her eye and a quivering of her lip which betokened wrath.

'Pardon me, Lady Davenant,' said Harry, smiling sweetly. 'May I interrupt you for a few moments?'

'You may,' replied her husband, speaking for her. 'Go on, Mr. Goslett. Do not hurry yourself, pray. We are glad to see you'—he cleared his throat—'very glad, indeed.'

'I came to say,' he went on, still addressing the lady, 'that I am a comparatively idle man; that is, for the moment I have no work, and am undecided about my movements, and that, if I can be of any help in the Preparation of the Case, you may command my services. Of course, Lady Davenant, everybody knows the importance of your labours and of his lordship's, and the necessity for a clear Statement of your Case.'

Lady Davenant replied with a cry like a sea-gull. 'Oh! his lordship's labours, indeed! Yes, Mr. Goslett, pretty labours! Day after day goes on—I don't care, Timothy—I don't care who knows it—day after day goes on, and we get no further. Four months and two weeks gone of the time, and the Case not even written out yet.'

'What time?' asked Harry.

'The time that nephew Nathaniel gave us to prove our claim. He found the money for our passage: he promised us six dollars a week for six months. In six months, he said, we should find whether our claim was allowed or not. There it was, and we were welcome for six months. Only six weeks left, and he goes to sleep!'

'But, Lady Davenant—only six weeks! It is impossible—you cannot send in a claim and get it acknowledged in six weeks. Why, such claims may drag on for years before a Committee of the House of Lords.'

'He wastes all the time: he has got no ambition: he goes to sleep when he ought to be waking. If we have to go home again, with nothing done, it will be because he is so lazy. Shame upon you, obstinate old man! Oh! lazy and sleepy old man!' She shook her finger at him in so terrifying a manner, that he was fain to clutch at the arms of the chair, and his teeth chattered.

'Aurelia Tucker,' her ladyship went on, warming to her work as she thought of her wrongs,—'Aurelia Tucker always said that, Lord or no Lord, my husband was too lazy to stand up for his rights. Everybody in Canaan City knew that he was too lazy. She said that if she was me, and trying to get the family title, she wouldn't go across the water to ask for it, but she would make the American Minister in London tell the British Government that they would just have to grant it, whether they liked it or not, and that a plain American citizen was to take his place in their House of Lords. Otherwise, she said, let the Minister tell their Mr. Gladstone that Canada would be annexed. That's fine talkin', but as for me I want things done friendly, an' I don't want to see my husband walkin' into his proper place in Westminster with Stars and Stripes flyin' over his head and a Volunteer Fire Brigade Band playin' "Hail! Columbia" before him. No. I said that justice was to be got in the old country, and we only had to cross over and ask for it. Then nephew Nathaniel said that he didn't expect much more justice was to be expected in England than in New Hampshire. And that what you can't always get in a free country isn't always got where there's Lords and Bishops and a Queen. But we might try if we liked for six months. And he would find the dollars for that time. Now there's only six weeks left, and we haven't even begun to ask for that justice.'

'Clara Martha,' said his lordship; 'I've been thinking the matter over, and I've come to the conclusion that Aurelia Tucker is a sensible woman. Let us go home again, and send the Case to the Minister. Let us frighten them.'

'It does not seem bad advice,' said Harry. 'Hold a meeting in Canaan City, and promise the British Lion that he shall be whipped into a cocked hat unless you get your rights. Make a national thing of it.'

'No!' She stamped her foot, and became really terrible. 'We are here, and we will demand our rights on the spot. If the Minister likes to take up the Case, he may; if not, we will fight our own battles. But oh! Mr. Goslett, it's a dreadful hard thing for a woman and a stranger to do all the fightin' while her husband goes to sleep.'

'Can't you keep awake till you have stated your Case?' asked Harry. 'Come, old boy, you can take it out in slumber afterwards; and if you go on sleeping till the Case is decided, I expect you will have a good long refreshing rest.'

'It was a beautiful morning, Clara Martha,' his lordship explained in apology, 'quite a warm morning. I didn't know people ever had such warm weather in England. And somehow it reminded me of Canaan City in July. When I think of Canaan, my dear, I always feel sleepy. There was a garden, Mr. Goslett, and trees and flowers, at the back of the school-house. And a bee came in. I didn't know there were bees in England. While I listened to that bee, bummin' around most the same as if he was in a Free Republic, I began to think of home, Clara Martha. That is all.'

'Was it the bee,' she asked with asperity, 'that drew your handkerchief over your head?'

'Clara Martha,' he replied with a little hesitation, 'the bee was a stranger to me. He was not like one of our New Hampshire bees. He had never seen me before. Bees sting strangers.'

Harry interrupted what promised to be the beginning of another lovers' quarrel, to judge by the twitchings of those thin shoulders and the frowning of those bead-like eyes.

'Lady Davenant,' he said, 'let us not waste the time in recrimination; accept my services. Let me help you to draw up the Statement of your Case.'

This was something to the purpose: with a last reproachful glance upon her husband, her ladyship collected the papers and put them into the hands of her new assistant.

'I'm sure,' she said, 'it's more'n kind of you, Mr. Goslett. Here are all the papers. Mind, there isn't the least doubt about it, not the shadow of a doubt; there never was a claim so strong and clear. Timothy Clitheroe Davenant is as much Lord Davenant by right of lawful descent, as—as—you are your father's son.'

Harry spent the morning with the papers spread before him, arranging the Case. Lord Davenant, now undisturbed, slept quietly in his arm-chair. Her ladyship left them alone.

About half-past twelve the sleeping claimant awoke and rubbed his eyes. 'I have had a most refreshing slumber, Mr. Goslett,' he yawned; 'a man who is married wants it. Sometimes it is what we shall do when we get the title confirmed; sometimes it's why we haven't made out our Case yet; sometimes it's why I don't go and see the Queen myself; sometimes it is how we shall crow over Aurelia Tucker when we are established in our rights; . . . . but, whatever it is, it is never a quiet night. I think, Mr. Goslett, that if she'd only hold her tongue and go to sleep, I might make headway with that Case in the morning.'

'It seems straightforward enough,' said Harry. 'I can draw up the thing for you without any trouble. And then you must find out the best way to bring your claim before the House of Lords.'

'Put it into the Post Office, addressed to the Queen,' suggested the Claimant.

'No—not quite that, I think,' said Harry. 'There's only one weak point in the Case.'

'I knew you'd find out the weak point. She won't allow there's any weak point at all. Says it's clear from beginning to end.'

'So it is, if you make an admission.'

'Well, sir, what is that admission? Let us make it at once, and go on. Nothing can be fairer; we are quite prepared to meet you halfway with that admission.'

His lordship spoke as if conferring an immense advantage upon an imaginary opponent.

'I do not mind,' he said, 'anybody else finding out the weak point, because then I can tackle him. What vexes me, Mr. Goslett, is to find out that weak point myself. Because then, there is nobody to argue it out with, and it is like cold water running down the back, and it keeps a man awake.'

'As for your admission——' said Harry, laughing.

'Well, sir, what is it?'

'Why, of course, you have to admit, unless you can prove it, that this Timothy Clitheroe Davenant, wheelwright, was the Honourable Timothy Clitheroe Davenant, only son of Lord Davenant.'

His lordship was silent for a while.

'Do you think, sir, that the Queen will see this weak point?'

'I am quite sure that her advisers will.'

'And do you think—hush, Mr. Goslett, let us whisper. Do you think that the Queen will refuse to give us the title because of this weak point? Hush! she may be outside.' He meant his wife, not Her Majesty.

'A Committee of the House of Lords most undoubtedly may refuse to consider your claim proved.'

His lordship nodded his head in consideration of this possibility. Then he laughed gently, and rubbed his hands.

'It would be rough at first. That is so, for certain, sure. There would be sleepless nights. And Aurelia Tucker would laugh. Clara Martha would——' he shuddered. 'Wal, if we hev to go home without our title, I should be resigned. When a man is sixty years of age, sir, and, though born to greatness, not brought up accordin' to his birth, he can't always feel like settin' in a row with a crown upon his head; and though I wouldn't own up before Clara Martha, I doubt whether the British Peers would consider my company quite an honour to the Upper House. Though a plain citizen of the United States, sir, is as good as any Lord that lives.'

'Better,' said Harry. 'He is much better.'

'He is, Mr. Goslett, he is. In the land where the Bird of Freedom——'

'Hush, my Lord. You forget that you are a British Peer. No spread-eagle for you.'

Lord Davenant sighed.

'It is difficult,' he said, 'and I suppose there's no more loyal citizens than us of Canaan City.'

'Well, how are we to connect this Wheelwright Timothy with the Honourable Timothy who was supposed to be drowned?'

'There is his age, and there is his name. You've got those, Mr. Goslett. And then, as we agreed before, we will agree to that little admission.'

'But if everybody does not agree?'

'There is also the fact that we were always supposed to be heirs to something in the old country,'

'I am afraid that is not enough. There is this great difficulty. Why should a young Englishman, the heir to a title and a great property, settle down in America and practise a handicraft?'

'Wal, sir, I can't rightly say. My grandfather carried that secret with him. And if you'll oblige me, sir, you'll tell her ladyship that we are agreed upon that little admission which makes the connection complete. It will be time enough to undeceive her when the trouble begins. As for Aurelia Tucker, why ——' here he smiled sweetly. 'If I know Clara Martha aright, she is quite able to tackle Aurelia by herself.'

This was the way in which the conduct of the Great Davenant Case fell into the hands of a mere working man.

CHAPTER XI.

THE FIRST DAY.

Angela's genteel place of business, destined as it was to greatness, came into the world with little pomp and no pretence. On the day appointed, the workgirls came at nine, and found a brass plate on the door and a wire blind in the windows, bearing the announcement that this was the 'Dressmakers' Association.' This information gave them no curiosity, and produced no excitement in their minds. To them it seemed nothing but another artifice to attract the attention of a public very hard to move. They were quite used to these crafty announcements; they were cynically incredulous of low prices; they knew the real truth as to fabrics of freshness unlasting and stuffs which would never wear out: and as regards forced sales, fabulous prices, and incredible bargains, they merely lifted the eyelid of the scoffer and went into the workroom. Whatever was written or printed on bills in the window, no difference was ever made to them. Nor did the rise and fall of markets alter their wages one penny. This lack of interest in the success of their work is certainly a drawback to this *métier*, as to many others. Would it not be well if workmen of all kinds were directly interested in the enterprise for which they hire out their labour?

If you have the curiosity to listen to the talk of workgirls in the evenings when they walk home, or as they journey homewards slowly in the crawling omnibus, you will be struck by a very remarkable phenomenon. It is not that they talk without stopping, because that is common to youthful woman in every rank. It is that in the evening they are always exasperated. They snap their lips, they breathe quick, they flash their eyes, they clench their fingers, and their talk is a narrative of indignation full of 'sezee' 'sezi,' and 'sezshe'—mostly the last, because what 'she' said is generally the cause of all this wrath. A philosopher, who once investigated the subject, was fortunate enough to discover why workgirls are always angry at eventide. He maintains that it means nothing in the world but Nagging; they all, he says, sit together—forewomen, dressmakers, improvers, and apprentices—in one room. The room, whether large or small, is always close; the hours are long; as they sit at their work, head bent, back bent, feet still, they gradually get the Fidgets. This is a real disease while it lasts. In the workroom it has got to last until the time to knock off. First it seizes the limbs, so that the younger ones want to get up and jump and dance, while the elder ones would like to kick. If not relieved, the patient next gets the Fidgets in her nerves, so that she wriggles in her chair, gets spasmodic twitchings, shakes her head violently, and bites her thread with viciousness. The next step is extreme irritability; this is followed by a disposition on the part of the forewoman to find fault, and by a determination on the part of the workgirls not to be put upon, with an intention of speaking up should the occasion arise. Then comes Nagging, which is, in fact, nothing but Fidgets translated into English Prose. Some forewomen are excellent translators. And the end is general exasperation, with fines, notices to leave, warnings, cheekiness, retorts, accusations, charges, denials, tears, fault-findings, sneers, angry words, bitter things, personal reflections, innuendoes, disrespect, bullying, and every element of a Row Royal. Consequently, when the girls go home they are exasperated.

We know how Angela proposed to prevent the outbreak of this contagious disorder by ventilation, exercise, and frequent rests.

She took her place among the girls, and worked with them, sitting beside Nelly Sorensen, who was to have charge of the workroom. Rebekah, with Miss Messenger's magnificent Order on her mind, sat in the show-room waiting for visitors. But none came except Mrs. Bormalack, accompanied by her Ladyship, who stepped over to offer their congratulations and best wishes, and to see what Miss Messenger was going to have.

At eleven o'clock, when the first two hours' pull is beginning to be felt by the younger hands, Angela invited everybody to rest for half an hour. They obeyed with some surprise, and followed her with considerable suspicion, as if some mean advantage was going to be taken of them, some trick 'sprung' upon them.

She took them into a kind of court, which had been the back garden, paved with asphalte and provided with nets, racquets, and all the gear for lawn tennis. She invited them to play for half an hour. It was a fine morning in early September, with a warm sun, a bright sky, and a cool breeze—the very day for lawn tennis. The girls, however, looked at the machinery and then at each other, and showed no inclination for the game. Then Angela led the way into the great glass room, where she pointed out the various bars, ropes, and posts which she had provided for their gymnastic exercises. They looked at each other again, and showed a disposition to giggle.

They were seven girls in all, not counting Rebekah, who remained in the show-room; and Nelly, who was a little older than the rest, stood rather apart. The girls were not unhealthy-looking, being all quite young, and therefore not as yet ruined as to the complexion by gas and bad air. But they looked dejected, as if their work had no charms for them—indeed, one can hardly imagine that it had—they were only surprised, not elated, at the half-hour's recreation; they expected that it would be deducted from their wages, and were resentful.

Then Angela made them a speech. She said, handling a racquet to give herself confidence, that it was highly necessary tc take plenty of exercise in the open air ; that she was sure work would be better done and more quickly done if the fingers did not get too tired; therefore, that she had had this tennis-court prepared for them and the gymnasium fitted up, so that they might play in it every day. And then selecting Nelly and two others, who seemed active young creatures, she gave them their first lesson in lawn tennis.

The next day she gave a lesson to another set. In a few days tennis became a passion with the girls. The fashion spread. Lawn tennis is not an expensive game; shortly there will be no bit of square garden or vacant space in Stepney but will be marked out into its lawn-tennis courts.

The gymnasium took longer to become popular. Girls do not like feats of strength ; nor was it until the spell of wet weather last October, when outdoor games became impossible, that the gymnasium began to attract at all. Then a spirit of emulation was set up, and bodily exercises became popular. After becoming quite sure that no deduction was made on account of the resting time, the girls ceased to be suspicious, and accepted the gift with something like enthusiasm. Yet, Miss Kennedy was their employer : therefore, a natural enemy ; therefore, gifts from her continued, for some time, to be received with doubt and suspicion. This does not seem, on the whole, a healthy outcome of our social system ; yet such an attitude is unfortunately common among workgirls.

At half-past eleven they all resumed work.

At one o'clock another astonishment awaited them.

Miss Kennedy informed them that one of the reforms introduced by her was the providing of dinner every day, without deducting anything from the wages. Those to whom dinner was, on most days, the mockery of a piece of bread-and-butter, or a bun, or some such figment and pretence of a meal, simply gasped, and the stoutest held her breath for a while, wondering what these things might mean.

Yes, there was dinner laid for them upstairs on a fair white cloth; for every girl a plentiful dish of beef with potatoes and other good things, and a glass of Messenger's Family Ale—that at eight and six the nine-gallon cask;—and bread *à discrétion.* Angela would have added pudding, but was dissuaded by her forewoman, on the ground that not only would pudding swallow up too much of the profits, but that it would demoralise the girls. As it was, one of them, at the mere aspect and first contemplation of the beef, fell a-weeping. She was lame, and she was the most dejected among them all. Why she wept, and how Angela followed her home, and what that home was like, and why she and her mother and her sisters do now continually praise and pray for Angela, belong to another story, concerned with the wretchedness and misery which are found at Whitechapel and Stepney, as well as in Soho and Marylebone and the back of Regent Street. I shall not write many chapters of that story, for my own part.

Truly a most wonderful workshop. Was ever such an association of dressmakers?

After dinner they frolicked and romped, though as yet in an untaught way, until two, when they began work again.

Miss Kennedy then made them another speech.

She told them that the success of their enterprise depended in great measure upon their own industry, skill and energy; that they were all interested in it, because they were to receive, besides their wages, a share in the profits; this they only partly understood. Nor did they comprehend her scheme much more when she went on to explain that they had the house and all the preliminary furniture found for them, so that there would be nothing, at first, to pay for rent. They had never considered the question of rent, and the thing did not go home to them. But they saw in some vague way that here was an employer of a kind very much unlike any they had ever before experienced, and they were astonished and excited.

Later on, when they might be getting tired again, they had a visitor. It was no other than Captain Sorensen. He said that by permission of Miss Kennedy he would read to them for an hour, and that, if she permitted and they liked, as he was an old man with nothing to do, he would come and read to them often.

So this astonishing day passed on.

They had tea at five, with another half-hour's rest. As the evening was so fine, it was served in the garden.

At seven they found that it was time to strike work—an hour at least earlier than at any other house. What *could* these things mean?

And then fresh marvels. For when the work was put away, Miss Kennedy invited them all to follow her upstairs. There she formally presented them with a room for their own use in the evening if they pleased. There was a piano in it; but, unfortunately, nobody could play. The floor was polished for dancing, but then no one could dance; and there was a table with games upon it, and magazines and illustrated papers. In this room, Miss

Kennedy told them, they could sing, dance, play, read, talk, sit, or do anything else in reason, and within the limits of modest recreation. They might also, on Saturday evenings, bring their friends, brothers, and so forth, who would also be expected to behave within the limits of modesty and good breeding. In short, the place was to be a drawing-room, and Angela proposed to train the girls by example and precept into a proper feeling as regards the use of a drawing-room. There was to be no giggling, no whispering in corners, nor was there to be any horseplay. Good manners lie between horseplay on the one hand and giggling on the other.

The kind of evening proposed by their wonderful mistress struck the girls at first with a kind of stupefaction. Outside, the windows being open, they could hear the steps of those who walked, talked, and laughed on Stepney Green. They would have preferred to be among that throng of idle promenaders; it seemed to them a more beautiful thing to walk up and down the paths than to sit about in a room and be told to play. There were no young men. There was the continual presence of their employer. They were afraid of her; there was also Miss Hermitage, of whom also they were afraid; there was, in addition, Nelly Sorensen, of whom they might learn to be afraid. As for Miss Kennedy, they were the more afraid of her because, not only did she walk, talk, and look like a person out of another world, but, oh! wonderful! she knew nothing—evidently nothing—of their little tricks. Naturally one is afraid of a person who knows nothing of one's wicked ways. This is the awkwardnes. in entertaining angels. They naturally assume that their entertainers stand on the same elevated level as themselves; this causes embarrassment. Most of us, like Angela's shop-girls, would, under the circumstances, betray a tendency to giggle.

Then she tried to relieve them from their awkwardness by sitting down to the piano and playing a lively gallop.

'Dance, girls!' she cried.

In their early childhood, before they went to school or workshop, the girls had been accustomed to a good deal of dancing. Their ball-room was the street; their floor was the kerbstone; their partners had been other little girls; their music the organ-grinder's. They danced with no steps, save such as came by nature; but their little feet struck true and kept good time. Now they were out of practice; they were grown big, too; they could no longer seize each other by the waist and caper round and round. Yet the music was inspiriting; eyes brightened, their heels became as light as air. Yet, alas! they did not know the steps.

Angela stopped playing and looked round her. The girls were crowded together.

Rebekah Hermitage sat apart at the table. There was that in her face which betokened disapproval, mingled with curiosity, for she had never seen a dance, and never, except on a barrel-organ, heard dance music. Nelly Sorensen stood beside the piano watching the player with the devotion which belongs to the disciple who loves the most. Whatever Miss Kennedy did was right and sweet and beautiful. Also, whatever she did filled poor Nelly with a sense of humiliation, because she herself felt so ignorant.

'Rebekah! Nelly!' cried Angela. 'Can you not help me?'

Both shook their heads.

'I cannot dance,' said Rebekah, trying to show a little scorn or, at least, some disapprobation. 'In our Connection we never dance.'

'You never dance?' Angela forgot for the moment that she was in Stepney, and among a class of girls who do not dance. 'Do you sing?'

'If any is merry,' replied Rebekah, 'let him sing hymns.'

'Nelly, can you help me?'

She, too, shook her head. But, she said, 'her father could play the fiddle. Might he come?'

Angela begged her to invite him immediately, and on her way to ask Mr. Goslett, at Mrs. Bormalack's, to bring his fiddle too. Between them they would teach the girls to dance.

Then she sat down and began to sing. First she sang, 'By the Banks of Allan Water,' and then 'The Bailiff's Daughter of Islington,' and next, 'Drink to me only with thine eyes'—sweet and simple ditties all. Then came Captain Sorensen, bearing his fiddle, and happy to help; and while he played, Angela stood all the girls in a row before her, headed by Nelly, and gave them their first lesson in the giddy dance.

Then came Harry Goslett; and at sight of his cheerful countenance and at the mere beholding how he bowed to Miss Kennedy, and asked to be allowed, and put his arm round her waist and whirled her round in a gallop, their hearts were lifted up, and they longed no more for Stepney Green. Then he changed Miss Kennedy for Nelly; and though she was awkward at first, she soon fell into the step, while Miss Kennedy danced with another; and then Mr. Goslett with another, and so on till all had had a practical lesson. Then they ceased altogether to long for the jest of the gallant 'prentice; for what were jests to this manly, masterful seizure by the waist, this lifting almost off the feet, this whirl round and round to the music of the fiddle which the brave old Captain played as merrily as any bo's'n's mate or quartermaster on an East Indiaman? In half an hour the feet of all but one—the one who, poor girl, was lame—felt that noble sympathy with the music so readily caught by those intelligent organs, and —*they could dance.* Perhaps for the first time in the annals of Stepney her daughters had learned to dance.

The rest would be easy. They tried a quadrille, then another gallop. Harry endeavoured to do his duty, but there were some who remarked that he danced twice, that second gallop, with Nelly Sorensen, and they were jealous. Yet it was only an unconscious tribute paid to beauty. The young fellow was among a bevy of dressmakers; an uncommon position for a man of his bringing-up.

One of them, somehow, was, to all appearance, and to any but perhaps the most practised eye, a real genuine lady—not a copy at all; the other was so graceful and sweet that she seemed to want but a touch to effect the transformation. As for the other girls, they were simple young persons of the work-room and counter—a common type. So common, alas! that we are apt to forget the individuality of each, her personal hopes, and her infinite possibilities. Yet, however insignificant is the crowd, the individual is so important.

Then he was interested in the dark-eyed girl who sat by herself at the table, looking on anxiously, at an amusement she had always heard of as 'soul-destroying.' She was wondering why her ears were pleased with the playing, and why her brain was filled with strange images, and why it was so pleasant to watch the girls dancing, their eyes aglow and their cheeks flushed.

'Do not tempt me,' she said, when Harry ventured to invite her, too, to join the giddy throng. 'Do not tempt me—no—go away!'

Her very brusqueness showed how strong was the temptation. Was she, already, giving way at the first temptation?

Presently, the evening was over, the girls had all trooped noisily out of the house, and Angela, Captain Sorensen, Nelly, and the young workman were walking across the Green in the direction of the Almshouse.

When Angela got home to the Boarding House the dreariness of the evening was in full blast. The boarders were sitting in silence, each wrapt in his own thoughts. The Professor lifted his head as she entered the room, and regarded her with thoughtful eyes, as if appraising her worth as a *clairvoyante.* David Fagg scowled horribly. His lordship opened his mouth as if to speak, but said nothing. Mr. Maliphant took his pipe out of his mouth, and began a story. 'I remember,' he said, 'the last time but one that he was ruined'—he did not state the name of the gentleman—'the whole town was on fire, and his house with them. What did he do? Mounted his horse and rode around, and bought up all the timber for twenty miles around. And see what he's worth now!' When he had told his story he relapsed into silence. Angela thought of that casual collection of unsympathetic animals put into a cage and called 'Happy Family.'

CHAPTER XII.

SUNDAY AT THE EAST END.

SUNDAY morning in and about the Whitechapel and Mile End Roads, Angela discovered to be a time of peculiar interest. The closing of the shops adds to the dignity of the broad thoroughfares, because it hides so many disagreeable and even humiliating things. But it by no means puts a stop to traffic, which is conducted with an ostentatious disregard of the Fourth Commandment or Christian custom. At one end, the City end, is Houndsditch, crowded with men who come to buy and sell; and while the bells of St. Botolph call upon the faithful with a clanging and clashing which ring like a cry of despair, the footpath is filled with the busy loungers, who have long since ceased to regard the invitation as having anything at all to do with them.

Strange and wonderful result of the gathering of men in great cities! It is not a French, or an English, or a German, or an American result—it is universal; in every great city of the world, below a certain level, there is no religion—men have grown dead to their higher instincts; they no longer feel the possibilities of humanity; faith brings to them no more the evidence of things unseen. They are crowded together, so that they have ceased to feel their individuality. The crowd is eternal—they are part of that eternity; if one drops out, he is not missed; nobody considers that it will be his own turn some day so to drop out. Life is nothing for ever and ever, but work in the week with as much beer and tobacco as the money will run to, and loafing on Sundays with more beer and tobacco. This, my friends, is a truly astonishing thing, and a thing unknown until this century. Perhaps, however, in ancient Rome, the people had ceased to believe in their Gods; perhaps, in Babylon, the sacred bricks were kicked about by the unthinking mob; perhaps, in every great city, the same loss of individual manhood may be found.

It was on a Sunday morning in August that Angela took a little journey of exploration, accompanied by the young workman who was her companion in these excursions. He led her into Houndsditch and the Minories, where she had the pleasure of inspecting the great Mercantile Interest of old clothes, and of gazing upon such as buy and sell therein. Then she turned her face northwards, and entered upon a journey which twenty years ago would have been full of peril, and is now, to one who loves his fellow man, full of interest.

The great Boulevard of the East was thronged with the class of men who keep the Sabbath in holy laziness with tobacco. Some of them lounge, some talk, some listen, all have pipes in their mouths. Here was a circle gathered round a man who was waving his arms and shouting. He was an Apostle of Temperance; behind him stood a few of his private friends to act as a *claque*. The listeners seemed amused but not convinced. 'They will probably,' said Harry, 'enjoy their dinner beer quite as much as if they had not heard this sermon.' Another circle was gathered round a man in a cart, who had a flaming red flag to support him. He belonged, the flag told the world, to the Tower Hamlets Magna Charta Association. What he said was listened to with the same languid curiosity and tepid amusement. Angela stopped a moment to hear what he had to say. He was detailing, with immense energy, the particulars of some awful act of injustice committed upon a friend unknown, who got six months. The Law of England is always trampling upon some innocent victim, according to this sympathiser with virtue. The working men have heard it all before, and they continue to smoke their pipes, their blood not quickened by a single beat. The ear of the people is accustomed to vehemence; the case must be put strongly before it will listen at all; and listening, as most bawlers discover, is not conviction.

Next to the Magna Charta brethren a cheap-jack had placed his cart. He drove a roaring trade in two-penn'orths, which, out of compliment to a day which should be devoted to good works, consisted each of a bottle of sarsaparilla, which he called 'sassaple,' and a box of pills. Next to him the costers stood beside their carts loaded with cheap ices, ginger-beer, and lemonade—to show that there was no deception, a great glass jar stood upon each cart with actual undeniable slices of lemon floating in water and a lump of ice upon the top; there were also piles of plums, plums without end, early August apples, and windfall pears; also sweet things in foot-long lumps sticky and gruesome to look upon; Brazil nuts, always a favourite article of commerce in certain circles, though not often met with at the tables of the luxurious; late oranges, more plums, many more plums, plums in enormous quantities; and periwinkles, which last all the year round, with whelks and vinegar, and the toothsome shrimp. Then there came another circle, and in the midst stood a young man, with long fair hair and large blue eyes. He was preaching the Gospel, as he understood it; his face was the face of an enthusiast; a little solitude, a little meditation among the mountains, would have made this man a seer of visions and a dreamer of dreams. He was not ridiculous, though his grammar was defective and his pronunciation had the cockney twang, and his aspirates were wanting; nothing is ridiculous that is in earnest. On the right of the street they passed the head-quarters of the Salvation Army; the brave warriors were now in full blast, and the fighting, 'knee-drill,' singing, and storming of the enemy's fort were at their highest and most enjoyable point; Angela looked in and found an immense hall crammed with people who came to fight, or to look on, to scoff, or gaze. Higher up, on the left, stands a rival in red-hot religion, the Hall of the Jubilee Singers, where another vast crowd was worshipping, exhorting, and singing.

'There seems,' said Angela, 'to be too much exhorting; can they not sit down somewhere in quiet for praise and prayer?'

'We working people,' replied her companion, 'like everything loud and strong. If we are persuaded to take a side, we want to be always fighting on that side.'

Streams of people passed them, lounging or walking with a steady purpose. The former were the indifferent and the callous, the hardened and the stupid, men to whom preachers and orators appealed in vain; to whom Peter the Hermit might have bawled himself hoarse, and Bernard would have thrown all his eloquence away; they smoked short pipes, with their hands in their pockets, and looked good-tempered; with them were boys, also smoking short pipes, with their hands in their pockets. Those who walked were young men dressed in long frock-coats of a shiny and lustrous black, who carried Bibles and Prayer Books with some ostentations. They were on their way to church; with them were their sisters, for the most part well-dressed, quiet girls, to whom the noise and the crowds were a part of life, a thing not to be avoided, hardly felt as a trouble.

'I am always getting a new sensation,' said Angela.

'What is the last?'

'I have just realised that there are thousands and thousands of people who never, all their lives, get to a place where they can be quiet. Always noise always crowds, always buying and selling.'

'Here at least,' said Harry, 'there is no noise.'

They were at the wicket gate of the Trinity Almshouse.

'What do you think, Miss Kennedy?'

'It is a haven of rest,' she replied, thinking of a certain picture. 'Let us, too, seek peace awhile.'

It was just eleven o'clock, and the beadsmen were going to their chapel. They entered the square, and joined the old men in their weekly service. Angela discovered to her disappointment, that the splendid flight of steps leading to the magnificent portal was a dummy, because the real entrance to the chapel was a lowly door beneath the stone steps, suited, Mr. Bunker would have said, to the humble condition of the moneyless.

It is a plain chapel, with a small organ in the corner, a tiny altar, and over the altar the ten commandments in a black wood frame—rules of life for those whose life is well-nigh done—and a pulpit, which serves for reading the service as well as delivering the sermon. The congregation consisted of about thirty of the almsmen, with about half as many old ladies; and Angela wondered why these old ladies were all dressed in black, and all wore crape. Perhaps they desired by the use of this material to symbolise mourning for the loss of opportunities for making money; or for the days of beauty and courtship, or for children dead and gone, or to mark the humility which becomes an Inmate, or to do honour to the day which is still revered by many Englishwomen as a day of humiliation and rebuke, or in the belief that crape confers dignity. We know not, we know nothing; the love which women bear for crape is a mystery; man can but speculate idly on their ways. We are like the philosopher picking up pebbles by the seaside. Among the old people sat Nelly Sorensen, a flower of youth and loveliness, in her simple black dress, and her light hair breaking out beneath her bonnet. The Catholics believe that no church is complete without a bone of some dead saint or beatified person. Angela made up her mind, on the spot, that no act of public worship is complete without the assistance of youth as well as of age.

The men were all dressed alike in blue coats and brass buttons, the uniform of the place; they seemed all, with the exception of one who was battered by time, and was fain to sit while the rest stood, to be of the same age, and that might be anything between a hearty sixty-five and a vigorous eighty. After the manner of sailors, they were all exact in the performance of their share in public worship, following the prayers in the book and the lessons in the Bible. When the time came for listening they straightened themselves out in an attitude comfortable for listening. The Scotch elder assumes, during the sermon, the air of a hostile critic; the face of the British rustic becomes vacant; the eyes of the ordinary listener in church show that his thoughts are far away; but the expression of a sailor's face, while he is performing the duty—part of the day's duty—of listening to the sermon, shows respectful attention, although he may have heard it all before.

Angela did not listen much to the sermon: she was thinking of the old men for whom that sermon was prepared. There was a fresh colour upon their faces, as if it was not so very long since their cheeks had been fanned by the strong sea breeze; their eyes were clear, they possessed the bearing which comes of the habit of command, and they carried themselves as if they were not ashamed of their poverty. Now Bunker, Angela reflected, would have been very much ashamed, and would have hung his head in shame. But then Bunker was one of the nimble-footed hunters after money, while these ignoble persons had contented themselves with the simple and slavish record of duty done.

The service over, they were joined by Captain Sorensen and his daughter, and for half an hour walked in the quiet court behind the church in peaceful converse. Angela walked with the old man, and Nelly with the young man. It matters little what they talked about, but it was something good, because when the Captain went home to his dinner, he kissed his daughter, and said that it seemed to him that it was the best day's work he ever did when he let her go to Miss Kennedy.

In the evening, Angela made another journey of exploration with the same escort. They passed down Stepney Green, and plunged among the labyrinth of streets lying between the Mile End Road and the Thames. It is as unlovely a collection of houses as may be found anywhere, always excepting Hoxton, which may fairly be considered the Queen of Unloveliness. The houses in this part are small, and they are almost all of one pattern. There is no green thing to be seen; no one plants trees, there seem to be no gardens; no flowers are in the windows; there is no brightness of paint or of clean windows; there is nothing of joy, nothing to gladden the eye.

'Think,' said Harry, almost in a whisper, as if in homage to the Powers of Dirt and Dreariness, 'think what this people could be made if we could only carry out your scheme of the Palace of Delight.'

'We could make them discontented, at least,' said Angela. 'Discontent must come before reform.'

'We should leave them to reform themselves,' said Harry. 'The mistake of philanthropists is to think that they can do for people what can only be done by the people. As you said this morning, there is too much exhorting.'

Presently they struck out of a street rather more dreary than its neighbours, and found themselves in a broad road with a great church.

'This is Limehouse Church,' said Harry. 'All round you are sailors. There is East India Dock Road. Here is West India Dock Road. There is the Foreign Sailors' Home: and we will go no further, if you please, because the streets are all full, you perceive, of the foreign sailors and the English sailors and the sailors' friends.'

Angela had seen enough of the sailors. They turned back. Harry led her through another labyrinth into another broad street, also crowded with sailors.

'This is Shadwell,' said her guide; 'and if there is anything in Shadwell to interest you, I do not know what it is. Survey Shadwell!'

Angela looked up the street and down the street; there was nothing for the eye in search of the beautiful or the picturesque to rest upon. But a great bawling of rough voices came from a large tent stuck up, oddly, beside the road. A white canvas sheet with black letters proclaimed this as the place of worship of the 'Happy Gypsies.' They were holding their Sunday Function.

'More exhorting!' said Angela.

'Now, this,' he said, as they walked along, 'is a more interesting place. It used to be called Ratcliffe Highway, and had the reputation of being the wickedest place in London. I dare say it was all brag, and that really it was not much worse than its neighbours.'

It is a distinctly squalid street, that now called St. George's-in-the-East. But it has its points; it is picturesque, like a good many dirty places; the people are good-tempered, though they do not wash their faces even on Sundays. They have quite left off knocking down, picking pockets, kicking, and robbing the harmless stranger; they are advancing slowly towards civilisation.

'Come this way,' said Harry.

He passed through a narrow passage, and led the way into a place at the sight of which Angela was fain to cry out in surprise.

In it was nothing less than a fair and gracious garden planted with flowers, and these in the soft August sunshine showed sweet and lovely. The beds were well kept; the walks were of asphalte; there were seats set about, and on them old women and old men sat basking in the evening sun. The young men and maidens walked along the paths—an Arcadian scene.

'This little strip of Eden,' said Harry, 'was cut out of the old churchyard.'

The rest of the churchyard was divided from the garden by a railing, and round the wall were the tombstones of the departed obscure. From the church itself was heard the rolling of the organ and the soft singing of a hymn.

'This,' said Angela, 'is better than exhortation. A garden for meditation and the church for prayer. I like this place better than the Whitechapel Road.'

'I will show you a more quiet place still,' said her guide. They walked a little way farther down the main street, then he turned into a narrow street on the north, and Angela found herself in a square of clean houses round an enclosure of grass. Within the enclosure was a chapel, and tombs were dotted on the grass.

They went into the chapel, a plain edifice of the Georgian kind with round windows, and the evening sun shone through the window in the west. The high pews were occupied by a congregation of forty or fifty, all men. They all had light brown hair, and as they turned round to look at the new-comers, Angela saw that they all had blue eyes. The preacher, who wore a black gown and bands, was similarly provided as to hair and eyes. He preached in a foreign tongue, and as it is difficult to be edified by a sermon not in one's native speech, they shortly went out again. They were followed by the verger, who seemed not indisposed to break the monotony of the service by a few minutes' walk.

He talked English imperfectly, but he told them that it was the Church of the Swedes. Angela asked if they were all sailors. He said, with some seeming contempt for sailors, that only a few of them were sailors. She then said that she supposed that they were people engaged in trade. He shook his head again, and informed her with a mysterious air that many of the Swedish nobility lived in that neighbourhood. After this they came away, for fear of greater surprises.

They followed St. George's-in-the-East to the end of the street. Then they turned to the right, and passed through a straight and quite ignoble road leading north. It is a street greatly affected by Germans. German names are over every shop and on every brass plate. They come hither, these honest Germans, because to get good work in London is better than going after it to New York or Philadelphia, and nearer home. In the second generation their names will be Anglicised, and their children will have become rich London merchants, and very likely Cabinet ministers. They have their churches, too, the Reformed and the Lutheran, with nothing to choose between them on the score of ugliness.

'Let us get home,' said Angela; 'I have seen enough.'

'It is the joylessness of the life,' she explained, 'the ignorant, contented joylessness, which weighs upon one. And there is so much of it. Surely there is no other city in the world which is so utterly without joy as this East London.'

'No,' said Harry, 'there is not in the whole world a city so devoid of pleasant things. They do not know how to be happy. They are like your work-girls when you told them to dance.'

'Look!' she cried, 'what is that?'

There was a hoarse roar of many voices from a court leading out of the main road; the roar became louder; Harry drew the girl aside as a mob of men and boys and women rushed headlong out of the place. It was not a fight apparently, yet there was beating with sticks and kicking. For those who were beaten did not strike back in return. After a little, the beaters and kickers desisted, and returned to their court as to a stronghold whose rights they had vindicated.

Those who had been beaten were a band of about a dozen men and women. The women's shawls were hanging in tatters, and they had lost their bonnets. The men were without hats, and their coats were grievously torn. There was a thing among them which had been a banner, but the pole was broken, and the flag was dragged in the dirt and smirched.

One of them who seemed to be the leader—he wore a uniform coat something like a volunteer's coat—stepped to the front and called upon them all to form. Then with a loud voice he led off a hymn, in which all joined as they marched down the street.

He was hatless, and his cheek was bleeding from an open wound. Yet he looked undaunted, and his hymn was a song of triumph. A well-set-up young fellow, with thick black hair and a black beard, but pale cheeks. His forehead was square and firm; his eyes were black and fierce.

'Good heavens!' cried Harry. 'It is my cousin Tom, Captain in the Salvation Army. And that, I suppose, is a regiment. Well, if standing still to be kicked means a victory, they have scored one to-night.'

The pavement was even more crowded than in the morning. The political agitators bawled more fiercely than in the forenoon to their circle of apathetic listeners; the preachers exhorted the unwilling more fervently to embrace the Faith. Cheap-jack was dispensing more volubly his two penn'orths of 'sassaple.' The workmen lounged along with their pipes in their mouths, more lazily than in the morning. The only difference was that the shop-boys were now added to the crowd, every lad with a 'twopenny smoke' between his lips; and that the throng was increased by those who were going home from church.

'Let us, too, go home,' said Angela; 'there is too much humanity here: we shall lose ourselves among the crowd.'

CHAPTER XIII.

ANGELA'S EXPERIMENT.

'No, Constance,' Angela wrote, 'I cannot believe that your lectures will be a failure, or that your life's work is destined to be anything short of a brilliant success—an "epoch-making" episode in the history of Woman's Rise. If your lectures have not yet attracted reading men, it must be because they are not yet known. It is unworthy of faith in your own high mission to suppose that personal appearance or beauty has anything to do with popularity in matters of mind. Who asks—who can ask?—whether a woman of genius is lovely or not? And to take lower ground: every woman owns the singular attractiveness of your own face, which has always seemed to me, apart from personal friendship, the face of pure intellect. I do not give up my belief that the men will soon begin to run after your lectures as they did after those of Hypatia, and that you will become in the University as great a teacher of Mathematics as Sir Isaac Newton himself. Meantime, it must be, I own, irksome to lecture on Vulgar Fractions, and the First Book of Euclid, and unsatisfactory to find, after you have made a Research and arrived at what seemed a splendid result, that some man has been before you. Patience, Constance!'

At this point the reader, who was of course Constance Woodcote, paused and smiled bitterly. She was angry because she had advertised a course of lectures on some desperately high mathematical subject and no one came to hear them. Had she been, she reflected, a pink and white girl with no forehead and soft eyes, everybody would have rushed to hear her. As it was, Angela, no doubt, meant well, but she was always disposed to give men credit for qualities which they did not possess. As if you could ever persuade a man to regard a woman from a purely intellectual point of view! After all, she thought, civilisation was only just begun: we live in a world of darkness: the reign of woman is as yet afar off. She continued her reading with impatience. Somehow her friend seemed to have drifted away: their lines were diverging: already the old enthusiasms had given place to the new, and Angela thought less of the great cause which she had once promised to further with her mighty resources.

'As regards the Scholarship which I promised you, I must ask you to wait a little, because my hands are full—so full of important things that even a new scholarship at Newnham seems a small thing. I cannot tell you in a letter what my projects are, and how I am trying to do something new with my great wealth. This, at least, I may tell you, partly because I am intoxicated with my own schemes, and therefore, I must tell everybody I speak to; and partly because you are perfectly certain not to sympathise with me, and therefore you will not trouble to argue the point with me. I have found out, to begin with, a great truth. It is that would-be philanthropists and benefactors and improvers of things have all along been working on a false assumption. They have taught and believed that the people look up to the "better class"—a phrase invented by the well-to-do in order to show how riches and virtue go together—for guidance and advice. My dear, it is the greatest mistake; they do not look up to us at all; they do not want to copy our ways; they are perfectly satisfied with their own ways; they will naturally take as much money as we choose to give them, and as many presents; and they consider the exhortations, teachings, preachings, admonitions, words of guidance, and advice as uncomfortable but unavoidable accompaniments of this gift. But we ourselves are neither respected nor copied. Nor do they want our culture.'

'Angela,' said the mathematician, 'is really very prolix.'

'This being so, I am endeavouring to make such people as I can get at discontented as a first step. Without discontent, nothing can be done. I work upon them by showing, practically, and by way of example, better things. This I can do because I am here as simply one of themselves—a workwoman among other workwomen. I do not work so much as the others in our newly-formed Association because I am supposed to run the machine, and to go to the West End for work. Miss Messenger is one of our customers. So much am I one of them, that I take my wages on Saturday, and am to have the same share, and no more, in the business as my dressmakers. I confess to you that in the foundation of my Dressmakers' Association I have violated most distinctly every precept of political and social economy. I have given them a house rent-free for a year; I have fitted it up with all that they want; I have started them with orders from myself; I have resolved to keep them going until they are able to run alone; I give wages, in money and in food, higher than the market value. I know what you will say. It is all quite true, scientifically. But outside the range of science there is humanity. And only think what a great field my method opens for the employment of the unfortunate rich—the unhappy, useless, heavily-burdened rich. They will all follow my example, and help the people to help themselves.

'My girls were at first and for the most part uninteresting, until I came to know them individually; everyone, when you know her, and can sympathise with her, becomes interesting. Some are, however, more interesting than others; there are two or three, for instance, in whom I feel a special interest. One of them, whom I love for her gentleness and for her loyalty to me, is the daughter of an old ship captain now in an almshouse. She is singularly beautiful, with an air of fragility which one hopes is not real; she is endowed by nature with a keenly sensitive disposition, and has had the advantage, rare in these parts, of a father who learned to be a gentleman before he came to the almshouse. The other is a religious fanatic, a sectarian of the most positive kind. She knows what is truth more certainly than any Professor of Truth we ever encountered; she is my manager and is good at business. I think she has come to regard me with less contempt, from a business point of view, than she did at first, because in the conduct of the show-room and the trying-on room she has all her own way.

'My evenings are mostly spent with the girls in the garden and "drawing-room." Yes, we have a drawing-room over the workroom. At first we had tea at five and struck work at seven; now we strike at half-past six and take tea with lawn-tennis. I assure you my dressmakers are as fond of lawn-tennis as the students of Newnham. When it is too dark to play, we go upstairs and have music and dancing.' Here followed a word which had been erased. The mathematical lecturer held the letter to the light and fancied the word was 'Harry.' This could hardly be; it must be Hetty, or Kitty, or Lotty, or some such feminine abbreviation. There could be no Harry. She looked again. Strange! It certainly *was* Harry. She shook her head suspiciously, and went on with the letter.

'The girls' friends and sisters have begun to come, and we are learning all kinds of dances. Fortunately my dear old captain from the almshouse can play the fiddle, and likes nothing better than to play for us. We place him in the corner beside the piano, and he plays as long as we please, being the best of all old captains. We are not well off for men, having at present to rely principally on a superior young cabinet-maker, who can also play the fiddle on occasions. He dances very well, and perhaps he will fall in love with the captain's daughter.

'What I have attempted is, in short, nothing less than the introduction of a love of what we call culture. Other things will follow, but at present I am contented with an experiment on a very humble scale. If I were to go among the people in my name, most of them would try to borrow or steal from me; as I am only a poor dressmaker, only those who have business with me try to take me in. I do not go on a platform and lecture the people: nor do I open a school to teach them; nor do I print and circulate tracts. I simply say, "My dears, I am going to dance and sing, and have a little music, and play lawn-tennis; come with me and we will dance together." And they come. And they behave well. I think it is a strange thing that young women of the lower class always prefer to behave well *when they can*, while young men of their own station take so much pleasure in noise and riot. We have no difficulty in our drawing-room, where the girls behave perfectly and enjoy themselves in a surprising manner. I find, alreay, a great improvement in the girls. They have acquired new interests in life; they are happier: consequently, they chatter like birds in spring and sunshine; and whereas, since I came into these regions, it has been a constant pain to listen to the querulous and angry talk of workgirls in omnibuses and in streets, I rejoice that we have changed all this, and while they are with me my girls can talk without angry snapping of the lips, and without the "sezi" and "sezee" and "sezshee" of the omnibus. This is surely a great gain for them.

'Next, I observe that they are developing a certain amount of pride in their own superiority: they are lifted above their neighbours, if only by the nightly drawing-room. I fear they will become unpopular from hauteur: but there is no gain without some loss. If only one felt justified in doubling the number of the girls! But the Stepney ladies have hitherto shown no enthusiasm in the cause of the Association. The feeling in these parts is, you see, commercial rather than co-operative.

'The dinner is to me the most satisfactory as well as the most unscientific part of the business. I believe I have no right to give them a dinner at all: it is against the custom in dressmakers' shops, where girls bring their own dinners, poor things: it costs quite a shilling a head every day to find the dinner, and Rebekah, my forewoman, tells me that no profits can stand against such a drain: but I must go on with the dinner even if it swallows up all the profits.

'On Sundays the drawing-room is kept open all day long for those who like to come. Some do, because it is quiet. In the evening we have sacred music. One of the young men plays the violin'—the reader turned back and referred to a previous passage—yes; she had already mentioned a cabinet-maker in connection with a fiddle—no doubt it must be the same—'and we have duets, but I fear the girls do not care much, yet, for classical music——'

Here the reader crumpled up the letter in impatience.

'And this,' she groaned, 'is the result of two years at Newnham! After her course of political economy, after all those lectures, after actually distinguishing herself and taking a place, this is the end! To play the piano for a lot of work-girls: with a cabinet-maker: and an old sailor: and to be a dressmaker! She actually enjoys being a dressmaker! That is, alas! the very worst feature in the case: she evidently likes it: she has no wish to return to civilisation: she has forgotten her science: she is setting a most mischievous example: and she has forgotten her distinct promise to give us a mathematical scholarship.

'Oh! Angela!'

She had imagined that the heiress would endow Newnham with great gifts, and she was disappointed. She had imagined this so very strongly that she felt personally aggrieved and injured: what did she care about Stepney work-girls? What have mathematics to do with poor people in an ugly and poor part of town?

Angela's letter did not convey the whole truth, because she herself was ignorant of the discussions, gossip, rumours, and reports which were flying about in the neighbourhood of Stepney Green concerning her venture. There were some, for instance, who demonstrated that such an institution must fail for reasons which they learnedly expounded: among these was Mr. Bunker. There were some who were ready to prove, from the highest authorities, the wickedness of trying to do without a proprietor, master, or boss; there were some who saw in this revolutionary movement the beginning of those troubles which will afflict mankind towards the coming of the end; there were others, among whom was also Mr. Bunker, who asked by what right this young woman had come among them to interfere, where she had got her money, and what were her antecedents? To Bunker's certain knowledge, and no one had better sources of information, hundreds had been spent by Miss Kennedy in starting the Association; while, whether it was true that Miss Messenger supported the place or not, there could never be enough work to get back all that money, pay all the wages, and the rent, and the dinners: and hot dinners every day! There was even talk of getting up a memorial praying Miss Messenger not to interfere with the trade of the place, and pointing out that there were many most respectable dressmakers' shops where the work could be quite as well done as by Miss Kennedy's girls, no doubt cheaper, and the profit would go to the rightful claimant of it, not to be divided among the workwomen.

As for the privileges bestowed upon the girls, there was in certain circles but one opinion—they were ridiculous. Recreation time, free dinner of meat and vegetables, short hours, reading aloud, and a club-room or drawing-room for the evening: what more could their betters have? For it is a fixed article of belief, one of the Twenty-Nine Articles in certain strata of society, that people 'below them' have no right to the enjoyment of anything. They do not mean to be cruel, but they have always associated poverty with dirt, discomfort, disagreeable companions, and the absence of pleasantness; for a poor person to be happy is either to them an impossibility, or it is a flying in the face of Providence. But then, these people know nothing of the joys which can be had without money. Now, when the world discovers and realises how many these are and how great they are, the reign of the almighty dollar is at an end. Whatever the Stepney folk thought, and however diverse their judgment, they were all extremely curious: and after the place had been open for a few weeks and began to get known, all the ladies from Whitechapel Church to Bow Church began with one consent to call. They were received by a young person of grave face and grave manner, who showed them all they wanted to see, answered all their questions, and allowed them to visit the work-rooms and the show-rooms, the dining-room and the drawing-room; they also saw most beautiful dresses which were being made for Miss Messenger; those who went there in the morning might see with their own eyes dressmaker girls actually playing lawn-tennis, if in the afternoon they might see an old gentleman reading aloud while the girls worked; they might also observe that there were flowers in the rooms; it was perfectly certain that there was a piano upstairs, because it had been seen by many, and the person in the show-room made no secret at all that there was dancing in the evening, with songs, and reading of books, and other diversions.

The contemplation of these things mostly sent the visitors away in sorrow. *They* did not dance or sing or play, *they* never wanted to dance or sing, lawn-tennis was not played by *their* daughters, *they* did not have bright-covered books to read; what did it mean, giving these things to dressmaker girls? Some of them not only resolved not to send their custom to the Association, but directed tracts to the house.

They came, however, after a time, and had their dresses made there, for a reason which will appear in the sequel. But at the outset they held aloof.

Far different was the reception given to the institution by the people for whose benefit it was designed. When they had quite got over their natural suspicion of a strange thing, when the girls were found to bring home their pay regularly on a Saturday, when the dinner proved a real thing and the hours continued to be merciful, when the girls reported continuously kind treatment, when the evenings spent in the drawing-room were found to be delightful, and when other doubts and whisperings about Miss Kennedy's motives, intentions, and secret character gradually died away, the Association became popular, and all the needle-girls of the place would fain have joined Miss Kennedy. The thing which did the most to create the popularity was the permission for the girls to bring some of their friends and people on the Saturday evening. They 'received' on Saturday evening: they were at home: they entertained their guests on that night: and, though the entertainment cost nothing but the lights, it soon became an honour and a pleasure to receive an invitation. Most of those who came at first were other girls; they were shy and stood about all arms: then they learned their steps: then they danced: then the weariness wore out of their eyes and the roses came back to their cheeks: they forgot the naggings of the workroom, and felt for the first time the joy of their youth. Some of them were inclined at first to be rough and bold, but the atmosphere calmed them; they either came no more, or if they came they were quiet; some of them affected a superior and contemptuous air, not uncommon with 'young persons' when they are jealous or envious, but this is a mood easily cured; some of them were frivolous, but these were also easily subdued. For always with them was Miss Kennedy herself, a Juno, their queen, whose manner was so kind, whose smile was so sweet, whose voice was so soft, whose greeting was so warm, and yet—yet . . . who could not be resisted, even by the boldest or the most frivolous. The first step was not to be afraid of Miss Kennedy: at no subsequent stage of their acquaintance did any cease to respect her.

As for Rebekah, she would not come on Saturday evening, as it was part of her Sabbath; but Nelly proved of the greatest use in maintaining the decorum and in promoting the spirit of the evenings, which wanted, it is true, a leader.

Sometimes the girls' mothers would come, especially those who had not too many babies; they sat with folded hands and wondering eyes, while their daughters danced, while Miss Kennedy sang, or Mr. Goslett played his fiddle. Angela went among them, talking in her sympathetic way, and won their confidence, so that they presently responded and told her all their troubles and woe. Or sometimes the fathers would be brought, but very seldom came twice. Now and then a brother would appear, but it was many weeks before the brothers began to come regularly; when they did, it became apparent that there was something in the place more attractive than brotherly duty or the love of dancing. Of course, sweethearts were bound to come whether they liked it or not. There were, at first, many little hitches, disagreeable incidents, rebellious exhibitions of temper, bad behaviour, mistakes, social sins, and other things of which the chronicler must be mute, because the general result is all that we desire to record. And this was satisfactory. For the first time the girls learned that there were joys in life, joys even within their reach, with a little help, poor as they were; joys which cost them nothing. Among them were girls of the very humblest, who had the greatest difficulty in presenting a decent appearance, who lived in crowded lodgings or in poor houses with their numerous brothers and sisters: pale-faced girls: heavy-hearted girls: joyless maidens, loveless maidens: girls who from long hours of work, and from want of open air and good food, stooped their shoulders and dragged their limbs—when Angela saw them first, she wished that she was a man to use strong language against their employers. How she violated all principles of social economy, giving clothes, secretly lending money, visiting mothers, paying rent, and all without any regard to supply and demand, marketable value, price current, worth of labour, wages rate, averages, percentages, interest, capital, commercial rules, theory of trade, encouragement of over-population, would be too disgraceful to narrate; indeed, she blushed when she thought of the beautiful and heart-warming science in which she had so greatly distinguished herself, and on which she trampled daily. Yet if, on the one side, there stood cold science, and, on the other, a suffering girl, it is ridiculous to acknowledge that the girl always won the day.

Among the girls was one who interested Angela greatly, not because she was pretty, for she was not pretty at all, but plain to look upon, and lame, but because she bore a very hard lot with patience and courage very beautiful to see. She had a sister who was crippled and had a weak back, so that she could not sit up long, nor earn much. She had a mother who was growing old and weak of sight, so that she could not earn much: she had a young brother who lived like the sparrows, that is to say, he ran wild in the streets and stole his daily bread, and was rapidly rising to the dignity and rank of an habitual criminal. He seldom, however, came home, except to borrow or beg for money. She had a father, whose name was never mentioned, so that he was certainly an undesirable father, a bad bargain of a father, a father impossible, viewed in connection with the Fifth Commandment. This was the girl who burst into tears when she saw the roast beef for the first time. Her tears were caused by a number of reasons: first, because she was hungry and her condition was low; secondly, because roasted beef to a hungry girl is a thing too beautiful; thirdly, because while she was feasting, her sister and her mother were starving. The crippled sister presently came to the house and remained in it all day. What special arrangements were made with Rebekah, the Spirit of Commerce, as regards her pay I know not: but she came, did a little work, sat or lay down in the drawing-room most of the time; and presently, under Miss Kennedy's instruction, began to practise on the piano. A workgirl, actually a workgirl, if you please, playing scales, with a one, two, three, four, one, two, three, four, just as if she was a lady living in the Mile End Road or the daughter of a clerk in the brewery!

Yes: the girls who had formerly worked in unhealthy rooms till half-past eight now worked in well-ventilated rooms till half-past six: they had time to rest and run about: they had good food: they had cheerful talk: they were encouraged: Captain Sorensen came to read to them: in the evening they had a delightful room to sit in, where they could read and talk, or dance, or listen. While they read the books which Miss Kennedy laid on the table for them, she would play and sing. First, she chose simple songs and simple pieces; and as their taste for music grew, so her music improved; and every day found the drawing-room more attractive, and the girls more loth to go home. She watched her experiment with the keenest interest; the girls were certainly growing more refined in manner and in thought. Even Rebekah was softening daily; she looked on at the dance without a shudder, even when the handsome young workman clasped Nelly Sorensen by the waist and whirled her round the room; and she owned that there was music in the world, outside her little chapel, far sweeter than anything they had within it. As for Nelly, she simply worshipped. Whatever Miss Kennedy did was right and beautiful and perfect in her eyes; nor, in her ignorance of the world, did she ponder any more over that first difficulty of hers, why a lady, and such a lad hady, come to Stepney Green to be a dressmaker.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE TENDER PASSION.

It is always a dangerous thing for two young persons of opposite sexes to live together under the same roof, even when the lady is plain and at first sight unattractive, and when the young man is stupid. For they get to know one another. Now, so great is the beauty of human nature, even in its second-rate or third-rate productions, that love generally follows when one of the two, by confession or unconscious self-betrayal, stands revealed to the other. It is not the actual man or woman, you see, who is loved—it is the ideal, the possible, the model or type from which the specimen is copied, and which it distinctly resembles. But think of the danger when the house in which these young people find themselves is not a large country house, where many are gathered together of like pursuits, but an obscure boarding-house in a Society-forgotten suburb, where these two had only each other to talk to. Add to this that they are both interested in an experiment of the greatest delicacy, in which the least false step would be fatal. Add, further, the fact that each is astonished at the other: the one to find in a dressmaker the refinement and all the accomplishments of a lady; the other to find in a cabinet-maker the distinguishing marks of a gentleman; the same way of looking at things and talking about them; the same bearing and the same courtesy.

The danger was even made greater by what seemed a preventive, namely, by the way in which at the beginning Angela so very firmly put down her foot on the subject of 'keeping company': there was to be no attempt at love-making; on that understanding the two could, and did, go about together as much as they pleased. What followed naturally was that more and more they began to consider, each the other, as a problem of an interesting character. Angela observed that the young workman, whom she had at first considered of a frivolous disposition, seemed to be growing more serious in his views of things, and even when he laughed there was method in his folly. No men are so solemn, she reflected, as the dull of comprehension; perhaps the extremely serious character of the place in which they lived was making him dull, too. It is difficult, certainly, for anyone to go on laughing at Stepney; the children, who begin by laughing, like children everywhere, have to give up the practice before they are eight years of age, because the streets are so insufferably dull; the grown-up people never laugh at all; when immigrants arrive from livelier quarters, say Manchester or Sheffield, after a certain time of residence—the period varies with the mercurial temperament of the patient—they laugh no more. 'Surely,' thought Angela, 'he is settling down; he will soon find work; he will become like other men of his class; and then, no doubt, he will fall in love with Nelly. Nothing could be more suitable.

By saying to herself, over and over again, that this arrangement should take place, she had got to persuade herself that it certainly would. 'Nelly possessed,' she said, 'the refinement of manner and nature, without which the young man would be wretched; she was affectionate and sensible; it would certainly do very well.' And she was hardly conscious, while she arranged this in her own head, of a certain uneasy feeling in her mind, which in smaller creatures might have been called jealousy.

So far, there had been little to warrant the belief that things were advancing in the direction she desired. He was not much more attentive to Nelly than to any other of her girls: worse still, as she reflected with trepidation, there were many symptoms by which he showed a preference for quite another person.

As for Harry, it was useless for him to conceal from himself any longer the fact that he was by this time head-over-ears in love. The situation offered greater temptations than his strength could withstand. He succumbed—whatever the end might be he was in love.

If one comes to think of it, this was rather a remarkable result of a descent into the Lower Regions. One expects to meet in the Home of Dull Ugliness things repellent, coarse, enjoying the freedom of Nature, unrestrained, unconventional. Harry found, on the contrary, the sweetness of Eden, a fair garden of delights, in which sat a peerless lady, the Queen of Beauty, a very Venus. All his life, that is, since he had begun to think about love at all, he had stoutly held and strenuously maintained that it was *lèse-majesté*, high treason, to love, for a man to throw away—he used to say 'throw away'—upon a maiden of low degree the passion which should be offered to a lady—a demoiselle. The position was certainly altered, inasmuch as he was no longer of gentle birth. Therefore, he argued, he would no longer pretend to the hand of a lady. At first he used to make Resolutions, as bravely as a Board of Directors: he would arise and flee to the desert—any place would be a desert without her: he would get out of temptation: he would go back to Piccadilly, and there forget her. Yet he remained: yet every day he sought her again; every day his condition became more hopeless: every day he continued to walk with her, play duets with her, sing with her, dance with her, argue with her, learn from her, teach her, watch over her, and felt the sunshine of her presence, and at meeting and parting touched her fingers.

She was so well educated, he said, strengthening his faith: she was so kindly and considerate: her manners were so perfect: she was so beautiful and graceful: she knew so well how to command, that he was constrained to own that no lady of his acquaintance was, or could be, her superior. To call her a dressmaker was to ennoble and sanctify the whole craft. She should be to that art what Cecilia is to music—its patron saint: she should be to himself—yet, what would be the end? He smiled grimly, thinking that there was no need to speculate on the end, when as yet there had been no beginning. He could not make a beginning. If he ventured on some shy and modest tentative in the direction of—call it an understanding—she froze. She was always on the watch: she seemed to say, 'Thus far you may presume, but no farther.' What did it mean? Was she really resolved never to receive his advances? Did she dislike him? That could hardly be. Was she watching him? Was she afraid to trust him? That might be. Or was she already engaged to some other fellow—some superior fellow—perhaps with a shop—gracious heavens!—of his own? That might be, though it made him cold to think it possible. Or did she have some past history, some unhappy complication of the affections, which made her as cold as Dian? That, too, might be.

The ordinary young man, thrown into the society of half-a-dozen working girls, would have begun to flirt and talk nonsense with all of them together, or with one after the other. Harry was not that kind of young man. There is always, by the blessing of kind heaven, left unto us a remnant of those who hold woman sacred, and continually praise, worship, and reverence the name of love. He was one of those young men. To flirt with a milliner did not seem a delightful thing to him, at any time. And in this case there was another reason why he should not behave in the manner customary to the would-be Don Juan: it was simply *fo de gentilhomme*; he was tolerated among them all on a kind of unspoken, but understood, parole. Miss Kennedy received him in confidence that he would not abuse her kindness.

One Sunday afternoon when they were walking together—it was in one of the warm days of last September—in Victoria Park, they had a conversation which led to really important things. There are one or two very pretty walks in that garden, and though the season was late, and the leaves mostly yellow, brown, crimson, or golden, there were still flowers, and the ornamental water was bright, and the path crowded with people who looked happy, because the sun was shining; they had all dined plentifully, with copious beer, and the girls had got on their best things, and the swains were gallant with a flower in the button-hole and a cigar between the lips. There is, indeed, so little difference between the rich and the poor; can even Hyde Park in the season go beyond the flower and the cigar? In certain tropical lands, the first step in civilisation is to buy a mosquito curtain, though your dusky epidermis is as impervious as a crocodile's to the sting of a mosquito. In this realm of England the first step towards gentility is the twopenny smoke, to which we cling, though it is made of medicated cabbage, though it makes the mouth raw, the tongue sore, the lips cracked, the eyes red, the nerves shaky, and the temper short. Who would not suffer in such a cause?

It began with a remark of Angela's about his continued laziness. He replied, evasively, that he had intended to take a long holiday, in order to look round and consider what was best to be done: that he liked holidays: that he meant to introduce holidays into the next trade dispute: that his holidays enabled him to work a little for Miss Kennedy, without counting his lordship, whose Case he had now drawn up: that he was now ready for work whenever, he added airily, work was ready for him: and that he was not, in fact, quite sure that Stepney and its neighbourhood would prove the best place for him to work out his life.

'I should think,' said Angela, 'that it would be as good a place as any you would find in America.'

'If you tell me to stay, Miss Kennedy,' he replied, with a sudden earnestness, 'I will stay.'

She instantly froze, and chillingly said that if his interests required him to go, of course he would go.

Therefore, Harry, after a few moments' silence, during which he battled with the temptation to 'have it out' there and then, before all the happy shepherds and shepherdesses of Bethnal Green, returned to his original form, and made as if those words had not been spoken and that effect not been produced. You may notice the same thing with children who have been scolded.

'Did you ever consider, Miss Kennedy, the truly happy condition of the perfect cabinet-maker?'

'No: I never did. Is he happy above his fellows?'

'Your questions betray your ignorance. Till lately—till I returned from America—I never wholly realised what a superior creature he is. Why, in the first place, the cabinet-maker is perhaps the only workman who never scamps his work; he is a responsible man: he takes pride in producing a good and honest thing. We have no tricks in our trade. Then, if you care to hear——'

'Pray go on; let me learn all I can.'

'Then, we were the first to organise ourselves. Our society was founded eighty years ago. We had no foolish strike, but we just met the employers and told them we were going to arrange with them what our share should be; and we made a book about wages—I do not think so good a book has been put together this century. Then, we are a respectable lot: you never hear of a cabinet-maker in trouble at a police court; very few of us get drunk; most of us read books and papers, and have opinions. My cousin Dick has very strong opinions. We are critical about amusements, and we prefer Henry Irving to a music-hall; we do not allow rough talk in the workshops; we are mostly members of some Church, and we know how to value ourselves.'

'I shall know how to value your craft in future,' said Angela, 'especially when you are working again.'

'Yes. I do not want to work in a shop, you know; but one may get a place, perhaps, in one of the railway carriage depôts, or a hotel, or a big factory, where they always keep a cabinet-maker in regular pay. My cousin Dick—Dick the Radical—is cabinet-maker in a mangle-factory. I do not know what he makes for his mangles, but that is what he is.'

'I have seen your cousin Tom, when he was rolled in the mud and before he led off the hymn and the procession. You must bring me your cousin Dick.'

'Dick is better fun than Tom. Both are terribly in earnest; but you will find Dick interesting.'

'Does he walk about on Sunday afternoons? Should we be likely to meet him here?'

'Oh, no. Dick is forging his speech for to-night. He addresses the Advanced Club almost every Sunday evening on the House of Lords, or the Church, or the Country Bumpkin's Suffrage, or the Cape question, or Protection, or the Nihilists, or Ireland, or America, or something. The speech must be red-hot, or his reputation would be lost. So he spends the afternoon sticking it into the furnace, so to speak. It doesn't matter what the subject is, always provided that he can lug in the bloated aristocrat and the hated Tory. I assure you, Dick is a most interesting person.'

'Do you ever speak at the Advanced Club?'

'I go there; I am a member; now and then I say a word. When a member makes a red-hot speech, brimful of insane accusations, and sits down amid a round of applause, it is pleasant to get up and set him right on matters of fact, because all the enthusiasm is killed when you come to facts. Some of them do not love me at the Club.'

'They are real and in earnest, while you——'

'No, Miss Kennedy, they are not real, whatever I may be. They are quite conventional. The people like to be roused by red-hot, scorching speeches; they want burning questions, intolerable grievances; so the speakers find them or invent them. As for the audience, they have had so many sham grievances told in red-hot words that they have become callous, and don't know of any real ones. The indignation of the speakers is a sham; the enthusiasm of the listeners is a sham; they applaud the eloquence, but as for the stuff that is said, it moves them not. As for his politics, the British workman has got a vague idea that things go better for him under the Liberals. When the Liberals come in, after making promises by the thousand, and when, like their predecessors, they have made the usual mess, confidence is shaken. Then he allows the Conservatives, who do not. at all events, promise oranges and beer all round, back again, and gives them another show. As if it matters which side is in to the British workman!'

'And they are not discontented,' asked Angela, 'with their own lives?'

'Not one bit. They don't want to change their own lives. Why should they?'

'All these people in the park to-day,' she continued, 'are they working men?'

'Yes: some of them: the better sort. Of course——' Harry looked round and surveyed the crowd, 'of course, when you open a garden of this sort for the people, the well-dressed come, and the ragged stay away and hide. There is plenty of ragged stuff round and about us, but it hides. And there is plenty of comfort which walks abroad and shows itself. This end of London is the home of little industries. Here, for instance, they make the things which belong to other things.'

'That seems a riddle,' said Angela.

'I mean things like card-boxes, pill-boxes, ornamented boxes of all kinds, for confectioners, druggists and drapers; they make all kinds of such things for wholesale houses. Why, there are hundreds of trades in this great neglected city of East London, of which we know nothing. You see the manufacturers. Here they are with their wives, and their sons, and their daughters: they all lend a hand, and between them the thing is made.'

'And are they discontented?' asked Angela, with persistence.

'Not they: they get as much happiness as the money will run to. At the same time, if the Palace of Delight were once built——'

'Ah!' cried Angela, with a sigh. 'The Palace of Delight: the Palace of Delight: we must have it: if it is only to make the people discontented.'

They walked home presently, and in the evening they played together, one or two of the girls being present, in the 'drawing-room.' The music softens: Angela repented her coldness of the afternoon. When the girls were gone, and they were walking side by side beneath moonlight on the quiet green, she made shyly a little attempt at compensation.

'If,' she said, 'you should find work here in Stepney, you would be willing to stay?'

'I would stay,' he replied, 'if you bid me stay—or go, if you bid me go.'

'I would bid you stay,' she replied, speaking as clearly and as firmly as she could, 'because I like your society and because you have been, and will be, I hope, very helpful to us. But if I bid you stay,' she laid her hand upon his arm, 'it must be on no misunderstanding.'

'I am your servant,' he said, with a little agitation in his voice. 'I understand nothing but what you wish me to understand.

CHAPTER XV.

A SPLENDID OFFER.

It was a strange coincidence that only two days after this conversation with Miss Kennedy, Harry received his first offer of employment.

It came from the Brewery, and was in the first instance a mere note sent by a clerk, inviting 'H. Goslett' to call at the Accountant's Office at ten in the morning. The name, standing bare and naked by itself, without any preliminary title of respect, Mister, Master, or Sieur, presented, Harry thought, a very miserable appearance. Perhaps it would be difficult to find a readier method of insulting a man than to hurl his own name at his head. One may understand how Louis Capet must have felt when thus reduced to a plain simplicity.

'What on earth,' Harry asked, forgetting his trade, 'can they want with me?'

In business houses, working men, even of the gentle craft of cabinet-making, generally carry with them tools, sometimes wear an apron, always have their trousers turned up, and never wear a collar—using, instead, a red muffler, which keeps the throat warmer, and does not so readily show the effects of London fog and smoke. Also some of their garments are sometimes made of corduroy, and their jackets have bulging pockets, and their hats not unfrequently have a pipe stuck in them. This young working man repaired to the trysting-place in the easy attire in which he was wont to roam about the bowers of the East End. That is to say, he looked like a carelessly dressed gentleman.

Harry found, at the office, his uncle, Mr. Bunker, who snorted when he saw his nephew.

'What are you doing here?' he asked. 'Can't you waste your time and bring disgrace on a hard-working uncle outside the place where he is known and respected?'

Harry sighed.

'Few of us,' he said, 'sufficiently respect their uncles. And with *such* an uncle—ah!'

What more might have passed between them, I know not. Fortunately, at this point, they were summoned to the presence of the Chief Accountant.

He knew Mr. Bunker and shook hands with him.

'Is this your nephew, Mr. Bunker?' he asked, looking curiously at the very handsome young fellow who stood before him with a careless air.

'Yes, he's my nephew; at least, he says so,' said Mr. Bunker, surlily. 'Perhaps, sir, you wouldn't mind telling him what you want, and letting him go. Then we can get to business.'

'My business is with both of you.'

'Both of us?' Mr. Bunker looked uneasy. What business could that be in which he was connected with his nephew?

'Perhaps I had better read a portion of a letter received by me yesterday from Miss Messenger. That portion which concerns you, Mr. Bunker, is as follows.'

Rather a remarkable letter had been received at the Brewery on the previous day from Miss Messenger. It was remarkable, and, indeed, disquieting, because it showed a disposition to interfere in the management of the Great Concern, and the interference of a young lady in the Brewery boded ill.

The Chief Brewer and the Chief Accountant read it together. They were a grave and elderly pair, both in their sixties, who had been regarded by the late Mr. Messenger as mere boys. For he was in the eighties.

'Yes,' said the Chief Brewer, as his colleague read the missive with a sigh, 'I know what you would say. It is not the thing itself; the thing is a small thing; the man may even be worth his pay; but it is the spirit of the letter, the spirit, that concerns me.'

'It is the spirit,' echoed the Chief Accountant.

'Either,' said the Chief Brewer, 'we rule here, or we do not.'

'Certainly,' said the Chief Accountant, 'and well put.'

'If we do not,'—here the Chief Brewer rapped the middle knuckle of the back of his left-hand forefinger with the tip of his right-hand forefinger,—'if we do not, what then?'

They gazed upon each other for a moment in great sadness, having before their eyes a hazy vision in which Miss Messenger walked through the Brewery, putting down the mighty and lowering salaries. A grateful reward for long and faithful services! At the thought of it, these two servants in their own eyes became patriarchal, as regards the length of years spent in the Brewery, and their long services loomed before them as so devoted and so faithful as to place them above the rewarding power of any salary.

The Chief Accountant was a tall old gentleman, and he stood in a commanding position on the hearth-rug, the letter in one hand and a pair of double eye-glasses in the other.

'You will see from what I am about to read to you, Mr. Bunker,' he began, 'that your services, such as they were, to the late Mr. Messenger, will not go unrewarded.'

Very good, so far; but what had his reward to do with his nephew?

'You were a good deal with Mr. Messenger at one time, I remember, Mr. Bunker.'

'I was; a great deal.'

'Quite so—quite so; and you assisted him, I believe, with his house property and tenants, and so forth?'

'I did.' Mr. Bunker cleared his throat. 'I did, and often Mr. Messenger would talk of the reward I was to have when he was took.'

'He left you nothing, however; possibly because he forgot. You ought, therefore, to be the more grateful to Miss Messenger for remembering you; particularly as the young lady has only heard of you by some kind of chance.'

'Has she—has she—sent something?' he asked.

The Chief Accountant smiled graciously.

'She has sent a very considerable present indeed.'

'Ah!' Mr. Bunker's fingers closed as if they were grappling with bank notes.

'Is it,' he asked in trembling accents,—'is it a cheque?'

'I think, Mr. Bunker, that you will like her present better than a cheque.'

'There can be nothing better than one of Miss Messenger's cheques,' he replied gallantly. 'Nothing in the world, except perhaps one that's bigger. I suppose it's notes, then?'

'Listen, Mr. Bunker:—

'"Considering the various services rendered to my grandfather by Mr. Bunker, with whom I believe you are acquainted, in connection with his property in Stepney and the neighbourhood, I am anxious to make him some substantial present. I have therefore caused inquiries to be made as to the best way of doing this. I learn that he has a nephew named Henry Goslett, by trade a cabinet-maker,"' here Mr. Bunker made violent efforts to suppress emotion, '"who is out of employment. I propose that he should be received into the Brewery, that a shop with all that he wants should be fitted up for him, and that he attend daily, until anything better offers, to do all that may be required in his trade. I should wish him to be independent as regards time of attendance, and that he should be paid at the proper rate for piece-work. In this way, I hope Mr. Bunker may feel that he has received a reward more appropriate to the friendly relations which seem to have existed between my grandfather and himself than a mere matter of money; and I am glad to be able to gratify him in finding honourable employment for one who is, I trust, a deserving young man."

'Then, Mr. Bunker, there is this——why, good heavens! man, what is the matter?'

For Mr. Bunker was purple with wrath. Three times he essayed to speak, three times he failed. Then he put on his hat and fled precipitately.

'What is the matter with him?' asked the Chief Accountant.

The young workman laughed.

'I believe,' he replied, 'that my uncle expected the cheque.'

'Well, well!' the Chief Accountant waved his hand. 'There is nothing more to be said. You will find your shop; one of the porters will take you to it; you will have all the broken things that used to be sent out, kept for you to mend, and—and—all that. What we want a cabinet-maker for in the Brewery, I do not understand. That will do. Stay—you seem a rather superior kind of workman.'

'I have had an education,' said Harry, blushing.

'Good; so long as it has not made you discontented. Remember that we want sober and steady men in this place, and good work.'

'I am not certain yet,' said Harry, 'that I shall be able to take the place.'

'Not take the place? Not take a place in Messenger's Brewery? Do you know that everybody who conducts himself well here is booked for life? Do you know what you are throwing away? Not take the place? Why, you may be cabinet-maker for the Brewery till they actually pension you off.'

'I am—I am a little uncertain in my designs for the future. I must ask for a day to consider.'

'Take a day. If, to-morrow, you do not present yourself in the workshop prepared for you, I shall tell Miss Messenger that you have refused her offer.'

Harry walked away with a quickened pulse. So far he had been posturing only as a cabinet-maker. At the outset he had no intention of doing more than posture for a while, and then go back to civilised life with no more difference than that caused by the revelation of his parentage. As for doing work, or taking a wage, that was very, very far from his mind. Yet now he must either accept the place, with the pay, or he must stand confessed a humbug. There remained but one other way, which was a worse way than the other two. He might, that is to say, refuse the work without assigning any reason. He would then appear in the character of a lazy and worthless workman—an idle apprentice, indeed; one who would do no work while there was money in the locker for another day of sloth. With what face would he stand before Miss Kennedy, revealed in these—his true colours?

It was an excellent opportunity for flight. That occurred to him. But flight!—and after that last talk with the woman whose voice, whose face, whose graciousness had so filled his head and inflamed his imagination.

He walked away, considering.

When a man is very much perplexed, he often does a great many little odd things. Thus, Harry began by looking into the office where his cousin sat.

Josephus's desk was in the warmest part of the room, near the fire—so much promotion he had received. He sat among half-a-dozen lads of seventeen or twenty years of age, who did the mechanical work of making entries in the books. This he did too, and had done every day for forty years. Beside him stood a great iron safe where the books were put away at night. The door was open. Harry looked in, caught the eye of his cousin, nodded encouragingly, and went on his way, his hands in his pockets.

When he came to Mrs. Bormalack's, he went in there too, and found Lord Davenant anxiously waiting for the conduct of the Case to be resumed, in order that he might put up his feet and take his morning nap.

'This is my last morning,' Harry said. 'As for your Case, old boy, it is as complete as I can make it, and we had better send it in as soon as we can, unless you can find any more evidence.'

'No—no,' said his lordship, who found this familiarity a relief after the stately enjoyment of the title, 'there will be no more evidence. Well, if there's nothing more to be done, Mr. Goslett, I think I will'—here he lifted his feet—'and if you see Clara Martha, tell her that—that——'

Here he fell asleep.

It was against the rules to visit the Dressmakers' Association in the morning or afternoon. Harry therefore went to the room where he had fitted his lathe, and began to occupy himself with the beautiful cabinet he was making for Miss Kennedy. But he was restless: he was on the eve of a very important step. To take a place; to be actually paid for piece-work; is, if you please, a very different thing from pretending to have a trade.

Was he prepared to give up the life of culture?

He sat down and thought what such a surrender would mean.

First, there would be no club: none of the pleasant dinners at the little tables with one or two of his own friends: no easy chair in the smoking-room for a wet afternoon: none of the talk with the men who are actually in the ring—political, literary, artistic, and dramatic: none of the pleasant consciousness that you are behind the scenes, which is enjoyed by so many young fellows who belong to good clubs. The club in itself would be a great thing to surrender.

Next, there would be no society.

He was at that age when society means the presence of beautiful girls: therefore, he loved society, whether in the form of a dance, or a dinner, or an at-home, or an afternoon, or a garden party, or any other gathering where young people meet and exchange those ideas which they fondly imagine to be original. Well, he must never think any more of society. That was closed to him.

Next, he must give up most of the accomplishments, graces, arts, and skill which he had acquired by dint of great assiduity and much practice. Billiards, at which he could hold his own against most; fencing, at which he was capable of becoming a professor; shooting, in which he was ready to challenge any

American; riding; the talking of different languages; what would it help him now to be a master in these arts? They must all go; for the future he would have to work nine hours a day for tenpence an hour, which is two pounds a week, allowing for Saturday afternoon. There would simply be no time for practising any single one of these things, even if he could afford the purchase of the instruments required.

Again: he would have to grieve and disappoint the kindest man in the whole world—Lord Jocelyn.

I think it speaks well for this young man that one thing did not trouble him—the question of eating and drinking. He would dine no more; working men do not dine; they stoke. He would drink no more wine: well, Harry always considered beer a most excellent and delicious beverage, particularly when you get it unadulterated.

Could he give up all these things? He did not conceive it possible, you see, that a man should go and become a workman, receiving a wage and obeying orders, and afterwards resume his old place among gentlemen, as if nothing had happened. Indeed, it would require a vast amount of explanation.

Then he began to consider what he would get if he remained.

One thing only would reward him. He was so far gone in love, that for this girl's sake he would renounce everything and become a workman indeed.

He could not work: the quiet of the room oppressed him: he must be up and moving while this struggle went on.

Then he thought of his uncle Bunker and laughed, remembering his discomfiture and wrath. While he was laughing the door opened, and the very man appeared.

He had lost his purple hue, and was now, in fact, rather pale, and his cheeks looked flabby.

'Nephew,' he said huskily, 'I want to talk to you about this thing; give over sniggerin', and talk serious now.'

'Let us be serious.'

'This is a most dreadful mistake of Miss Messenger's: you know at first I thought it must be a joke. That was why I went away; men of my age and respectability don't like jokes. But it was no joke. I see now it is just a mere dreadful mistake, which you can set right.'

'How can I set it right?'

'To be sure, I could do it myself, very easily. I have only got to write to her, and tell her that you've got no character, and nobody knows if you know your trade.'

'I don't think that would do, because I might write as well——'

'The best plan would be for you to refuse the situation and go away again. Look here, boy: you come from no one knows where; you live no one knows how; you don't do any work—my impression is, you don't want any; and you've only come to see what you can borrow or steal. That's my opinion. Now, don't let's argue, but just listen. If you'll go away quietly, without any fuss, just telling them at the Brewery that you've got to go, I'll give you—yes—I'll give you—twenty pounds down! There!'

'Very liberal indeed! But I am afraid——'

'I'll make it twenty-five. A man of spirit can do anything with twenty-five pounds down. Why, he might go to the other end of the world. If I were you I'd go there. Large openings there for a lad of spirit—large openings! Twenty-five pounds down, on the nail.'

'It seems a generous offer, still——'

'Nothing,' Mr. Bunker went on, 'has gone well since you came. There's this dreadful mistake of Miss Messenger's; then that Miss Kennedy's job. I didn't make anything out of that compared with what I might, and there's the——' He stopped because he was thinking of the houses.

'I *want* you to go,' he added, almost plaintively.

'And that, very much, is one of the reasons why I want to stay. Because, you see, you have not yet answered a question of mine. What did you get for me when you traded me away?'

For the second time his question produced a very remarkable effect upon the good man.

When he had gone, slamming the door behind him, Harry smiled sweetly.

'I know,' he said, 'that he has done "something," as they call it. Bunker is afraid. And I—yes—I shall find it out and terrify him still more. But, in order to find it out, I must stay. And if I stay, I must be a workman. And wear an apron! And a brown-paper cap! No. I draw the line above aprons. No consideration shall induce me to wear an apron. Not even—no—not if she were to make the apron a condition of marriage.'

CHAPTER XVI.

HARRY'S DECISION.

He spent the afternoon wandering about the streets of Stepney, full of the new thought that here might be his future home. This reflection made him regard the place from quite a novel point of view. As a mere outsider, he had looked upon the place critically, with amusement, with pity, with horror (in rainy weather), with wonder (in sunshiny days). He was a spectator, while before his eyes were played as many little comedies, comediettas, or tragedies, or melodramas as there were inhabitants. But no farces, he remarked, and no burlesques. The life of industry contains no elements of farce or of burlesque. But if he took this decisive step he would have to look upon the East End from an inside point of view; he would be himself one of the actors, he would play his own little comedy. Therefore he must introduce the emotion of sympathy, and suppress the critical attitude altogether.

There was once an Earl who went away and became a sailor before the mast; he seems to have enjoyed sailoring better than legislating, but was, by accident, ingloriously drowned while so engaged. There was also the Honourable Timothy Clitheroe Davenant, who was also supposed to be drowned, but in reality exercised until his death, and apparently with happiness, the craft of wheelwright. There was another unfortunate nobleman, well known to fame, who became a butcher in a colony, and liked it. Precedents enough of voluntary descent and eclipse, to say nothing of the involuntary obscurations, as when an *émigré* had to teach dancing, or the son of a Royal Duke was fain to become a village schoolmaster. These historical parallels pleased Harry's fancy until he recollected that he was himself only a son of the people and not of noble descent, so that they really did not bear upon his case, and he could find not one single precedent in the whole of history parallel with himself. 'Mine,' he said, formulating the thing, 'is a very remarkable and unusual case. Here is a man brought up to believe himself of gentle birth, and educated as a gentleman, so that there is nothing in the most liberal training of a gentleman that he has not learned, and no accomplishment which becomes a gentleman that he has not acquired. Then he learns that he is not a gentleman by birth, and that he is a pauper; wherefore, why not honest work? Work is noble, to be sure, especially if you get the kind of work you like, and please yourself about the time of doing it; nothing could be a more noble spectacle than that of myself working at a lathe for nothing, in the old days; would it be quite as noble at the Brewery, doing piece-work?'

These reflections, this putting of the case to himself, this grand dubiety, occupied the whole afternoon. When the evening came, and it was time for him to present himself in the drawing-room, he was no further advanced towards a decision.

The room looked bright and restful; wherever Angela went, she was accompanied and surrounded by an atmosphere of refinement. Those who conversed with her became infected with her culture; therefore, the place was like any drawing-room at the West End, save for the furniture, which was simple. Ladies would have noticed, even in such little things, in the way in which the girls sat and carried themselves, a note of difference. To Harry these minutiæ were unknown, and he saw only a roomfull of girls quietly happy and apparently well-bred: some were reading; some were talking; one or two were 'making' something for themselves, though their busy fingers had been at work all day. Nelly and Miss Kennedy were listening to the Captain, who was telling a yarn of his old East Indiaman. The three made a pretty group, Miss Kennedy seated on a low stool at the Captain's knee, while the old man leaned forward in his armchair, his daughter beside him watching, in her affectionate and pretty way, the face of her patron.

The quiet, peaceful air of the room, the happy and contented faces which before had been so harassed and worn, struck the young man's heart. Part of this had been his doing ; could he go away and leave the brave girl who headed the little enterprise to the tender mercies of a Bunker? The thought of what he was throwing up—the club life, the art life, the literary life, the holiday time, the delightful roving in foreign lands which he should enjoy no more—all seemed insignificant considered beside this haven of rest and peace in the troubled waters of the East End. He was no philanthropist; the cant of platforms was intolerable to him; yet he was thinking of a step which meant giving up of his own happiness for that of others: with, of course, the constant society of the woman he loved. Without that compensation the sacrifice would be impossible.

Miss Kennedy looked up and nodded to him kindly, motioning him not to interrupt the story, which the Captain presently finished.

Then they had a little music and a little playing, and there was a little dancing—all just as usual; a quiet, pleasant evening; and they went away.

'You are silent to-night, Mr. Goslett,' said Angela, as they took their customary walk in the quiet little garden called Stepney Green.

'Yes. I am like the parrot; I think the more.'

'What is in your mind?'

'This: I have had an offer—an offer of work—from the Brewery. Miss Messenger herself sent the offer, which I am to accept, or to refuse, to-morrow morning.'

'An offer of work? I congratulate you. Of course you will accept?' She looked at him sharply, even suspiciously.

'I do not know.'

'You have forgotten,' she said—in other girls the words and the tone of her voice would have sounded like an encouragement—'you have forgotten what you said only last Sunday evening.'

'No, I have not forgotten. What I said last Sunday evening only increases my embarrassment. I did not expect then—I did not think it possible that any work here would be offered to me.'

'Is the pay insufficient?'

'No; the pay is to be at the usual market rate.'

'Are the hours too long?'

'I am to please myself. It seems as if the young lady had done her best to make me as independent as a man who works for money can be.'

'Yet you hesitate. Why?'

He was silent; thinking what he should tell her. The whole truth would have been best; but then, one so seldom tells the whole truth about anything, far less about oneself. He could not tell her that he had been masquerading all the time, after so many protestations of being a real working man.

'Is it that you do not like to make friends among the East End workmen?'

'No.' He could answer this with truth. 'It is not that. The working men here are better than I expected to find them. They are more sensible, more self-reliant, and less dangerous. To be sure, they profess to entertain an unreasoning dislike for rich people, and, I believe, think that their lives are entirely spent over oranges and skittles. I wish they had more knowledge of books, and could be got to think in some elemental fashion about Art. I wish they had a better sense of beauty, and I wish they could be persuaded to cultivate some of the graces of life. You shall teach them, Miss Kennedy. Also, I wish that tobacco was not their only solace. I am very much interested in them. That is not the reason.'

'If you please to tell me—' she said.

'Well then'—he would tell that fatal half-truth,—'the reason is this: you know that I have had an education above what Fortune intended for me when she made me the son of Sergeant Goslett.'

'I know,' she replied. 'It was my case as well; we are companions in this great happiness.'

'The man who conferred this benefit upon me, the best and kindest-hearted man in the world, to whom I am indebted for more than I can tell you, is willing to do more for me. If I please, I may live with him, in idleness.'

'You may live in idleness? That must be indeed a tempting offer!'

'Idleness,' he replied, a little hurt at her contempt for what certainly was a temptation for him, 'does not always mean doing nothing.'

'What would you do, then?'

'There is the life of culture and art——'

'Oh, no!' she replied. 'Would you really like to become one of those poor creatures who think they lead lives devoted to art? Would you like to grow silly over blue china, to quarrel about colour, to worship Form in poetry, to judge everything by the narrow rules of the latest pedantic fashion?'

'You know this art world, then?'

'I know something of it, I have heard of it. Never mind me, think of yourself. You would not, you could not, condemn yourself to such a life.'

'Not to such a life as you picture. But, consider, I am offered a life of freedom instead of servitude.'

'Servitude! Why, we are all servants one of the other. Society is like the human body, in which all the limbs belong to each other. There must be rich and poor, idlers and workers; we depend one upon the other; if the rich do not work with and for the poor, retribution falls upon them. The poor must work for the rich, or they will starve; poor or rich, I think it is better to be poor; idler or worker, I know it is better to be worker.'

He thought of Lord Jocelyn: of the pleasant chambers in Piccadilly: of the club: of his own friends: of society: of little dinners; of stalls at the theatre: of suppers among actors and actresses: of artists and their smoking parties: of the men who write, and the men who talk, and the men who know everybody, and are full of stories: of his riding, and hunting, and shooting: of his fencing, and billiards, and cards.

All these things passed through his brain swiftly, in a moment. And then he thought of the beautiful woman beside him, whose voice was the sweetest music to him that he had ever heard.

'You must take the offer,' she went on, and her words fell upon his ear like the words of an oracle to a Greek in doubt. 'Work at the Brewery is not hard. You will have no taskmaster set over you; you are free to go and come, to choose your own time: there will be, in so great a place there must be, work, quite enough to occupy your time. Give up yearning after an idle life, and work in patience.'

'Is there anything,' he said, 'to which you could not persuade me?'

'Oh, not for me!' she replied impatiently. 'It is for yourself. You have your life before you, to throw away or to use. Tell me—' she hesitated a little; 'you have come back to your own kith and kin, after many years. They were strange to you at first, all these people of the East End—your own people. Now that you know them, should you like to go away from them, altogether away, and forget them? Could you desert them? You know, if you go, that you will desert them, for between this end of London and the other there is a great gulf fixed, across which no one ever passes. You will leave us altogether if you leave us now.'

At this point Harry felt the very strongest desire to make it clear that what concerned him most would be the leaving her, but he repressed the temptation, and merely remarked that if he did desert his kith and kin, they would not regret him. His uncle Bunker, he explained, had even offered him five-and-twenty pounds to go.

'It is not that you have done anything, you know, except to help us in our little experiment,' said Angela. 'But it is what you may do, what you shall do, if you remain.'

'What can I do?'

'You have knowledge: you have a voice: you have a quick eye and a ready tongue: you could lead, you could preside. Oh, what a career you might have before you!'

'You think too well of me, Miss Kennedy. I am a very lazy and worthless kind of man.'

'No.' She shook her head and smiled. 'I know you better than you know yourself. I have watched you for these months. And then, we must not forget, there is our Palace of Delight.'

'Are we millionaires?'

'Why, we have already begun it. There is our drawing-room; it is only a few weeks old, yet see what a difference there is already. The girls are happy; their finer tastes are awakened; their natural yearnings after things delightful are partly satisfied; they laugh and sing now; they run about and play. There is already something of our dream realised. Stay with us, and we shall see the rest.'

He made an effort and again restrained himself.

'I stay, then,' he said, 'for your sake—because you command me to stay.'

Had she done well? She asked herself the question in the shelter of her bedroom, with great doubt and anxiety. This young workman, who might if he chose be a—well, yes—a gentleman—quite as good a gentleman as most of the men who pretend to the title—was going to give up whatever prospects he had in the world, at her bidding, and for her sake! Yet, what he wished was impossible.

What reward, then, had she to offer him that would satisfy him? Nothing. Stay, he was only a man. One pretty face was as good as another; he was struck with hers for the moment. She would put him in the way of being attracted by another. Yes; that would do. This settled in her own mind, she put the matter aside, and, as she was very sleepy, she only murmured to herself, as her eyes closed, 'Nelly Sorensen.'

CHAPTER XVII.

WHAT LORD JOCELYN THOUGHT.

The subject of Angela's meditations was not where she thought him, in his own bedroom. When he left his adviser, he did not go in at once, but walked once or twice up and down the pavement, thinking. What he had promised to do was nothing less than to reverse, altogether, the whole of his promised life; and this is no light matter, even if you do it for love's sweet sake. And Miss Kennedy, being no longer with him, he felt a little chilled from the first enthusiasm. Presently he looked at his watch: it was still early; only half-past ten.

'There is the chance,' he said. 'It is only a chance. He generally comes back somewhere about this time.'

There are no cabs at Stepney, but there are tramways which go quite as fast, and, besides, give one the opportunity of exchanging ideas on current topics with one's travelling companions. Harry jumped into one, and sat down between a bibulous old gentleman, who said he lived in Fore Street, but had for the moment mislaid all his other ideas, and a lady who talked to herself as she carried a bundle. She was rehearsing something dramatic, a monologue, in which she was 'giving it' to somebody unknown. And she was so much under the influence and emotion of imagination, that the young man trembled lest he might be mistaken for the person addressed. However, happily, the lady so far restrained herself, and Aldgate was reached in peace. There he took a hansom and drove to Piccadilly.

The streets looked strange to him after his three months' absence; the lights, the crowds on the pavements, so different from the East End crowd; the rush of the carriages and cabs taking the people home from the theatre, filled him with a strange longing. He had been asleep; he had had a dream; there was no Stepney; there was no Whitechapel Road: a strange and wondrous dream. Miss Kennedy and her damsels were only part of this vision. A beautiful and delightful dream. He was back again in Piccadilly, and all was exactly as it always had been.

So far all was exactly the same, for Lord Jocelyn was in his chamber, and alone.

'You are come back to me, Harry?' he said, holding the young man's hand; 'you have had enough of your cousins and the worthy Bunker. Sit down, boy. I heard your foot on the stairs. I have waited for it a long time. Sit down and let me look at you. To-morrow you shall tell me all your adventures.'

'It *is* comfortable,' said Harry, taking his old chair and one of his guardian's cigarettes. 'Yes, Piccadilly *is* better, in some respects, than Whitechapel.'

'And there is more comfort the higher up you climb, eh?'

'Certainly, more comfort. There is not, I am sure, such an easy chair as this east of St. Paul's.'

Then they were silent, as becomes two men who know what is in each other's heart, and wait for it to be said.

'You look well,' said Harry presently. 'Where did you spend the summer?'

'Mediterranean. Yacht. Partridges.'

'Of course. Do you stay in London long?'

And so on. Playing with the talk, and postponing the inevitable, Harry learned where everybody had been, and who was engaged, and who was married, and how one or two had joined the majority since his departure. He also heard the latest scandal, and the current talk, and what had been done at the Club, and who had been black-balled, with divers small bits of information about people and things. And he took up the talk in the old manner, and fell into the old attitude of mind quite naturally, and as if there had been no break at all. Presently the clock pointed to one, and Lord Jocelyn rose.

'We will talk again to-morrow, Harry my boy, and the day after to-morrow, and many days after that. I am glad to have you back again.' He laid his hand upon the young man's shoulder.

'Do not go just yet,' said Harry, blushing and feeling guilty, because he was going to inflict pain on one who loved him. 'I cannot talk with you to-morrow.'

'Why not?'

'Because—sit down again and listen—because I have made up my mind to join my kith and kin altogether and stay among them.'

'What? Stay among them?'

'You remember what you told me of your motive in taking me. You would bring up a boy of the people like a gentleman. You would educate him in all that a gentleman can learn, and then you would send him back to his friends, whom he would make discontented, and so open the way for civilisation.'

'I said so—did I? Yes; but there were other things, Harry. You forget that motives are always mixed. There was affection for my brave sergeant and a desire to help his son; there were all sorts of things. Besides, I expected that you would take a rough kind of polish only—like nickel, you know, or pewter—and you turned out real silver. A gentleman, I thought, is born, not made. This proved a mistake. The puddle blood would show, I expected: which was prejudice, you see, because there is no such thing as puddle blood. Besides, I thought you would be stupid and slow to pick up ideas, and that you would pick up only a few; supposing in my ignorance, that all persons not "born," as the Germans say, must be stupid and slow.'

'And I was not stupid?'

'You? The brightest and cleverest lad in the whole world—you stepped into the place I made for you as if you had been born for it. Now tell me why you wish to step out of it.'

'Like you, sir, I have many motives. Partly, I am greatly interested in my own people; partly, I am interested in the place itself and its ways; partly, I am told, and I believe, that there is a great deal which I can do there—do not laugh at me.'

'I am not laughing, Harry; I am only astonished. Yes, you *are* changed: your eyes are different, your voice is different. Go on, my boy.'

'I do not think there is much to say—I mean, in explanation. But of course I understand—it is a part of the thing—that if I stay among them I must be independent. I could no longer look to your bounty, which I have accepted too long. I must work for my living.'

'Work? And what will you do?'

'I know a lot of things, but somehow they are not wanted at Stepney, and the only thing by which I can make money seems to be my lathe—I have become a cabinet-maker.'

'Heavens! You have become a cabinet-maker? Do you actually mean, Harry, that you are going to work—with your hands—for money?'

'Yes; with my hands. I shall be paid for my work; I shall live by my work. The puddle blood, you see.'

'No, no,' said Lord Jocelyn, 'there is no proof of puddle blood in being independent. But think of the discomfort of it.'

'I have thought of the discomfort. It is not really so very bad. What is your idea of the life I shall have to live?'

'Why,' said Lord Jocelyn, with a shudder, 'you will rise at six; you will go out in working clothes, carrying your tools, and with your apron tied round and tucked up like a missionary bishop on his way to a confirmation. You will find yourself in a workshop full of disagreeable people, who pick out unpleasant adjectives and tack them on to everything, and whose views of life and habits are—well, not your own. You will have to smoke pipes at a street corner on Sundays; your tobacco will be bad; you will drink bad beer—Harry! the contemplation of the thing is too painful.'

Harry laughed.

'The reality is not quite so bad,' he said. 'Cabinet-makers are excellent fellows. And as for myself, I shall not work in a shop, but alone. I am offered the post of cabinet-maker in a great place where I shall have my own room to myself, and can please my own convenience as to my hours. I shall earn about tenpence an hour, say seven shillings a day, if I keep at it.'

'If he keeps at it,' murmured Lord Jocelyn, 'he will make seven shillings a day.'

'Dinner in the middle of the day, of course,' Harry went on, with a cheerful smile. 'At the East End everybody stokes at one. We have tea at five and supper when we can get it. A simpler life than yours.'

'This is a programme of such extreme misery,' said Lord Jocelyn, 'that your explanations are quite insufficient. Is there, I wonder, a woman in the case?'

Harry blushed violently.

'There *is* a woman, then?' said his guardian, triumphantly. 'There always is. I might have guessed it from the beginning. Come, Harry, tell me all about it. Is it serious? Is she—can she be—at Whitechapel—a lady?'

'Yes,' said Harry, 'it is quite true. There is a woman, and I am in love with her. She is a dressmaker.'

'Oh!'

'And a lady.'

Lord Jocelyn said nothing.

'A lady,' Harry repeated the words, to show that he knew what he was saying. 'But it is no use. She won't listen to me.'

'That is more remarkable than your two last statements. Many men have fallen in love with dressmakers; some dressmakers have acquired partially the manners of a lady; but that any dressmaker should refuse the honourable attentions of a handsome young fellow like you, and a gentleman, is inconceivable.'

'A cabinet-maker, not a gentleman. But do not let us talk of her, if you please.'

Then Lord Jocelyn proceeded, with such eloquence as was at his command, to draw a picture of what he was throwing away compared with what he was accepting. There was a universal feeling, he assured his ward, of sympathy with him; everybody felt that it was rough on such a man as himself to find that he was not of illustrious descent; he would take his old place in society, all his old friends would welcome him back among them, with much more to the same purpose.

It was four o'clock in the morning when their conversation ended, and Lord Jocelyn went to bed sorrowful, promising to renew his arguments in the morning. As soon as he was gone, Harry went to his own room and put together a few little trifles belonging to the past which he thought he should like. Then he wrote a letter of farewell to his guardian, promising to report himself from time to time, with a few words of gratitude and affection. And then he stole quietly down the stairs and found himself in the open street. Like a school-boy, he had run away.

There was nobody left in the streets. Half-past four in the morning is almost the quietest time of any; even the burglar has gone home, and it is too early for anything but the market-garden carts on their way to Covent Garden. He strode down Piccadilly, and across the silent Leicester Square into the Strand. He passed through that remarkable thoroughfare, and, by way of Fleet Street, where even the newspaper offices were deserted, the leader-writers and the editor and the sub-editors all gone home to bed, to St. Paul's. It was then a little after five, and there was already a stir. An occasional foot-fall along the principal streets. By the time he got to the Whitechapel Road there were a good many up and about, and before he reached Stepney Green the day's work was beginning. The night had gone and the sun was rising, for it was six o'clock and a cloudless morning. At ten he presented himself once more at the accountant's office.

'Well?' asked the Chief.

'I am come,' said Harry, 'to accept Miss Messenger's offer.'

'You seem pretty independent. However, that is the way with you working men nowadays. I suppose you don't even pretend to feel any gratitude?'

'I don't pretend,' said Harry, pretty hotly, 'to answer questions outside the work I have to do.'

The Chief looked at him as if he could, if he wished, and was not a Christian, annihilate him.

'Go, young man,' he said presently, pointing to the door, 'go to your work. Rudeness to his betters a working man considers due to himself, I suppose. Go to your work.'

Harry obeyed without a word, being in such a rage that he could not speak. When he reached his workshop, he found waiting to be mended an office-stool with a broken leg. I regret to report that this unhappy stool immediately became a stool with four broken legs and a kicked-out seat.

Harry was for the moment too strong for the furniture.

Not even the thought of Miss Kennedy's approbation could bring him comfort. He was an artisan, he worked by the piece, that was nothing. The galling thing was to realise that he must now behave to certain classes with a semblance of respect, because now he had his 'betters.'

The day before, he was a gentleman who had no 'betters.' He was enriched by this addition to his possessions, and yet he was not grateful.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE PALACE OF DELIGHT.

THERE lies on the west and south-west of Stepney Green a triangular district, consisting of an irregular four-sided figure—what Euclid beautifully calls a trapezium—formed by the Whitechapel Road, the Commercial Road, Stepney Green and High Street, or Jamaica Street, or Jubilee Street, whichever you please to call your frontier. This favoured spot exhibits in perfection all the leading features which characterise the great Joyless City. It is, in fact, the heart of the East End. Its streets are mean and without individuality or beauty; at no season and under no conditions can they ever be picturesque; one can tell, without inquiring, that the lives led in those houses are all after the same model, and that the inhabitants have no pleasures. Everything that goes to make a city, except the means of amusement, is to be found here. There are churches and chapels—do not the blackened ruins of Whitechapel Church stand here? There are superior 'seminaries' and 'academies,' names which linger here to show where the yearning after the genteel survives; there is a Board School, there is the great London Hospital, there are almshouses, there are even squares in it—Sidney Square and Bedford Square, to wit—but there are no gardens, avenues, theatres, art galleries, libraries, or any kind of amusement whatever.

The leading thoroughfare of this quarter is named Oxford Street, which runs nearly all the way from the New Road to Stepney Church. It begins well with some breadth, a church and a few trees on one side, and almshouses with a few trees on the other. This promise is not kept; it immediately narrows and becomes like the streets which branch out of it, a double row of little two-storied houses, all alike. Apparently they are all furnished alike; in each ground-floor front there are the red curtains and the white blind of respectability, with the little table bearing something, either a basket of artificial flowers, or a big Bible, or a vase, or a case of stuffed birds from foreign parts to mark the gentility of the family. A little farther on, the houses begin to have small balconies on the first floor, and are even more genteel. The streets which run off north and south are like unto it but meaner. Now, the really sad thing about this district is that the residents are not the starving class, or the vicious class, or the drinking class; they are a well-to-do and thriving people, yet they desire no happiness, they do not feel the lack of joy, they live in meanness and are contented therewith. So that it is emphatically a representative quarter, and a type of the East End generally, which is for the most part respectable and wholly dull, and perfectly contented never to know what pleasant strolling and resting-places, what delightful interests, what varied occupation, what sweet diversions there are in life.

As for the people, they follow a great variety of trades. There are 'travelling drapers' in abundance; it is, in fact, the chosen *quartier* of that romantic following; there are a good many stevedores, which betrays the neighbourhood of docks; there are some who follow the mysterious calling of herbalist, and I believe you could here still buy the materials for those now forgotten delicacies, saloop and tansy pudding. You can, at least, purchase medicines for any disease under the sun if you know the right herbalist to go to. One of them is a medium as well; and if you call on him, you may be entertained by the artless prattle of the 'sperruts,' of whom he knows one or two. They call themselves all sorts of names—such as Peter, Paul, Shakespeare, Napoleon, and Byron—but in reality there are only two of them, and they are bad actors. Then there are cork-cutters, 'wine merchants' engineers'—it seems rather a grand thing for a wine merchant, above all other men, to want an engineer; novelists do not want engineers—sealing-wax manufacturers, workers in shellac and zinc, sign-painters, heraldic painters, coopers, makers of combs, iron-hoops, and sun-blinds, pewterers, feather-makers—they only pretend to make feathers; what they really do is to buy them, or to pluck the birds, and then arrange the feathers and trim them; but they do not really make them—ship-modellers, a small but haughty race; mat-dealers, who never pass a prison without using bad language, for reasons which many who have enjoyed the comforts of a prison will doubtless understand. There are also a large quantity of people who call themselves teachers of music. This may be taken as mere pride and ostentatious pretence, because no one wants to learn music in this country, no one ever plays any music, no one has a desire to hear any. If any one called and asked for terms of tuition, he would be courteously invited to go away, or the professor would be engaged, or he would be out of town. In the same way, a late learned professor of Arabic in the University of Cambridge was reported always to have important business in the country if an Arab came to visit the colleges. But what a lift above the stevedores, pewterers, and feather pretenders to be a professor of music!

Angela would plant her Palace in this region, the most fitting place, because the most dreary; because here there exists nothing, absolutely nothing, for the imagination to feed upon. It is, in fact, though this is not generally known, the purgatory prepared for those who have given themselves up too much to the enjoyment of roses and rapture while living at the West End. How beautiful are all the designs of Nature! Could there be, anywhere in the world, a more fitting place for such a purgatory than such a city? Besides, once one understands the thing, one is further enabled to explain why these grim and sombre streets remain without improvement. To beautify them would seem, in the eyes of pious and religious people, almost a flying in the face of Providence. And yet, not really so; for it may be argued that there are other places equally fitted for the punishment of these purgatorial souls—for instance, Hoxton, Bethnal Green, Battersea, and the Isle of Dogs.

Angela resolved, therefore, that on this spot the Palace of Joy should stand. There should be, for all who chose to accept it, a general and standing invitation to accept happiness and create new forms of delight. She would awaken in dull and lethargic brains a new sense, the sense of pleasure; she would give them a craving for things of which as yet they knew nothing. She would place within their reach, at no cost whatever, absolutely free for all, the same enjoyments as are purchased by the rich. A beautiful dream. They should cultivate a noble discontent; they should gradually learn to be critical; they should import into their own homes the spirit of discontent; they should cease to look on life as a daily uprising and a down-sitting, a daily mechanical toil, a daily rest. To cultivate the sense of pleasure is to civilise. With the majority of mankind the sense is undeveloped, and is chiefly confined to eating and drinking. To teach the people how the capacity of delight may be widened, how it may be taught to throw out branches in all manner of unsuspected directions, was Angela's ambition. A very beautiful dream.

She owned so many houses in this district that it was quite easy to find a place suitable for her purpose. She discovered upon the map of her property a whole four-square block of small houses, all her own, bounded north, south, east, and west by streets of other small houses, similar and similarly situated. This site was about five minutes west of Stepney Green, and in the district already described. The houses were occupied by weekly tenants, who would find no difficulty in getting quarters as eligible elsewhere. Some of them were in bad repair; and what with maintenance of roofs and chimneys, bad debts, midnight flittings, and other causes, there was little or no income derived from these houses. Mr. Messenger, indeed, who was a hard man, but not unjust, only kept them to save them from the small owner, like Mr. Bunker, whose necessities and greed made him a rack-rent landlord.

Having fixed upon her site, Angela next proceeded to have interviews—but not on the spot, where she might be recognised—with lawyers and architects, and to unfold partially her design. The area on which the houses stood formed a pretty large plot of ground, ample for her purpose, provided that the most was made of the space and nothing wasted. But a great deal was required; therefore she would have no lordly staircases covering half the ground, nor great ante-rooms, nor handsome lobbies. Everything, she carefully explained, was to be constructed for use and not for show. She wanted, to begin with, three large halls: one of them was to be a dancing-room, but it might also be a children's play-room for wet weather: one was to be used for a permanent exhibition of native talent, in painting, drawing, wood and ivory carving, sculpture, leather work and the like, everything being for sale at low prices; the last was to be a library, reading and writing-room. There was also to be a theatre, which would serve as a concert and music-room, and was to have an organ in it. In addition to these there were to be a great number of class-rooms for the various arts, accomplishments, and graces that were to be taught by competent professors and lecturers. There were to be other rooms where tired people might find rest, quiet, and talk—the women with tea and work, the men with tobacco. And there were to be billiard-rooms, a tennis-court, a racquet-court, a fives-court, and a card-room. In fact, there was to be space found for almost every kind of recreation.

She did not explain to her architect how she proposed to use this magnificent place of entertainment; it was enough that he should design it and carry out her ideas: and she stipulated that no curious inquirers on the spot should be told for what purpose the building was destined, nor who was the builder.

One cannot get designs for a palace in a week: it was already late in the autumn, after Harry had taken up his appointment, and was busy among the legs of stools, that the houses began to be pulled down and the remnants carted away. Angela pressed on the work: but it seemed a long and tedious delay before the foundations were laid and the walls began slowly to rise.

There should have been a great Function when the foundation-stone was laid, with a procession of the clergy in white surplices and college caps, perhaps a bishop, Miss Messenger herself, with her friends, a lord or two, the officers of the nearest Masonic Lodge, a few Foresters, Odd Fellows, Ancient Buffaloes, Druids and Shepherds, a flag, the charity children, a dozen policemen, and Venetian masts, with a prayer, a hymn, a speech, and a breakfast—nothing short of this should have satisfied the founder. Yet she let the opportunity slip, and nothing was done at all; the great building, destined to change the character of the Gloomy City into a City of Sunshine, was begun with no pomp or outward demonstration. Gangs of workmen cleared away the ignoble bricks; the little tenements vanished; a broad space bristling with little garden walls gaped where they had stood; then the walls vanished; and nothing at all was left but holes where cellars had been; then they raised a hoarding round the whole, and began to dig out the foundation. After the hoarding was put up, nothing more, for a long time was visible. Angela used to prowl round it in the morning, when her girls were all at work, but fearful lest the architect might come and recognise her.

As she saw her Palace begin to grow into existence, she became anxious about its success. The first beatific vision, the rapture of imagination, was over, and would come no more; she had now to face the hard fact of an unsympathetic people who perhaps would not desire any pleasure—or if any, then the pleasure of a 'spree' with plenty of beer. How could the thing be worked if the people themselves would not work it? How many could she reckon upon as her friends? Perhaps two or three at most. Oh! the Herculean task, for one woman, with two or three disciples, to revolutionise the City of East London!'

With this upon her mind, her conversations with the intelligent young cabinet-maker became more than usually grave and earnest. He was himself more serious than of old, because he now occupied so responsible a position in the Brewery. Their relations remained unchanged. They walked together, they talked, and they devised things for the drawing-room, and especially for Saturday evenings.

'I think,' he said, one evening when they were alone, except for Nelly, in the drawing-room, 'I think that we should never think or talk of working men in the lump, any more than we think of rich men in a lump. All sorts and conditions of men are pretty much alike, and what moves one moves all. We are all tempted in the same way; we can all be led in the same way.'

'Yes, but I do not see how that fact helps.'

They were talking, as Angela loved to do, of the scheme of the Palace.

'If the Palace were built, we should offer the people of Stepney, without prejudice to Whitechapel, Mile End, Bow, or even Cable Street, a great many things which at present they cannot get and do not desire. Yet they have always proved extremely attractive. We offer the society of the young for the young, with dancing, singing, music, acting, entertainments—everything except, which is an enormous exception, feasting: we offer them all for nothing; we tell them, in fact, to do everything for themselves: to be the actors, singers, dancers, and musicians.'

'And they cannot do anything.'

'A few can; the rest will come in. You forget, Miss Kennedy, the honour and glory of acting, singing, and performing in public. Can there be a greater reward than the applause of one's friends?'

'It could never be so nice,' said Nelly, 'to dance in a great hall among a lot of people as to dance up here, all by ourselves.'

The Palace was not, in these days, very greatly in the young man's mind. He was occupied with other things: his own work and position; the wisdom of his choice; the prospects of the future. For surely, if he had exchanged the old life and got nothing in return but work at a lathe all day at tenpence an hour, the change was a bad one. Nothing more had been said to him by Miss Kennedy about the great things he was to do, with her, for her, among his people. Was he, then, supposed to find out for himself these great things? And he made no more way with his wooing. That was stopped, apparently, altogether.

Always kind to him; always well pleased to see him; always receiving him with the same sweet and gracious smile; always frank and open with him; but nothing more.

Of late he had observed that her mind was greatly occupied; she was brooding over something; he feared that it might be something to do with the Associated Dressmakers' financial position. She did not communicate her anxieties to him, but always, when they were alone, wanted to go back to their vision of the Palace. Harry possessed a ready sympathy; he fell easily and at once into the direction suggested by another's words. Therefore, when Angela talked about the Palace, he too took up the thread of invention, and made believe with her as if it were a thing possible, a thing of brick and mortar.

'I see,' he went on this evening, warming to the work, 'I see the opening day, long announced, of the Palace. The halls are furnished and lit up; the dancing-room is ready; the theatre is completed, and the electric lights are lit; the concert-rooms are ready with their music-stands and their seats. The doors are open. Then a wonderful thing happens.'

'What is that?' asked Angela.

'Nobody comes.'

'Oh!'

'The vast chambers echo with the footsteps of yourself, Miss Kennedy, and of Nelly, who makes no more noise than a demure kitten. Captain Sorensen and I make as much trampling as we can, to produce the effect of a crowd. But it hardly seems to succeed. Then come the girls, and we try to get up a dance; but, as Nelly says, it is not quite the same as your drawing-room. Presently two men, with pipes in their mouths, come in and look about them. I explain that the stage is ready for them, if they like to act; or the concert-room, if they will sing; or the dancing-room, should they wish to shake a leg. They stare and they go away. Then we shut up the doors and go away and cry.'

'Oh, Mr. Goslett, have you no other comfort for me?'

'Plenty of comfort. While we are all crying, somebody has a happy thought. I think it is Nelly.'

She blushed a pretty rosy red. 'I am sure I could never suggest anything.'

'Nelly suggests that we shall offer prizes, a quantity of prizes, for competition in everything, the audience or the spectators to be judges; and then the Palace will be filled and the universal reign of joy will begin.'

'Can we afford prizes?' asked Angela the practical.

'Miss Kennedy,' said Harry, severely, 'permit me to remind you that, in carrying out this project, money, for the first time in the world's history, is to be of no value.'

If Newnham does not teach women to originate—which a thousand Newnhams will never do—it teaches them to catch at an idea and develop it. The young workman suggested her Palace; but his first rough idea was a poor thing compared with Angela's finished structure—a wigwam beside a castle, a tabernacle beside a cathedral. Angela was devising an experiment, the like of which has never yet been tried upon restless and dissatisfied mankind. She was going, in short, to say to them: 'Life is full, crammed full, overflowing with all kinds of delights. It is a mistake to suppose that only rich people can enjoy these things. They may buy them, but everybody may create them; they cost nothing. You shall learn music, and forthwith all the world will be transformed for you; you shall learn to paint, to carve, to model, to design, and the day shall be too short to contain the happiness you will get out of it. You shall learn to dance, and know the rapture of the waltz. You shall learn the great art of acting, and give each other the pleasure which rich men buy. You shall even learn the great art of writing, and learn the magic of a charmed phrase. All these things which make the life of rich people happy shall be yours; and they *shall cost you nothing.* What the heart of man can desire shall be yours; *and for nothing.* I will give you a house to shelter you and rooms in which to play; you have only to find the rest. Enter in, my friends; forget the squalid past; here are great halls and lovely corridors—they are yours. Fill them with sweet echoes of dropping music; let the walls be covered with your works of art; let the girls laugh and the boys be happy within these walls. I give you the shell, the empty carcase; fill it with the Spirit of Content and Happiness.'

Would they, to begin with, 'behave according'? It was easy to bring together half a dozen dressmakers: girls always like behaving nicely; would the young men be equally amenable? And would the policeman be inevitable, as in the corridors of a theatre? The police, however, would have to be voluntary, like every other part of the Institution, and the guardians of the peace must, like the performers in the entertainments, give their services for nothing. For which end, Harry suggested, it would be highly convenient to have a professor of the noble art of self-defence, with others of fencing, single-stick, quarter-staff, and other kindred objects.

CHAPTER XIX.

DICK THE RADICAL.

In the early days of winter, the walls of the palace being now already well above the hoarding, Angela made another important convert. This was no other than Dick Coppin, the cousin of whom mention has been already made.

'I will bring him to your drawing-room,' said Harry. 'That is, if he will come. He does not know much about drawing-rooms, but he is a great man at the Stepney Advance Club. He is the reddest of red-hot Rads, and the most advanced of Republicans. I do not think he would himself go a-murdering of kings and priests, but I fancy he regards these things as accidents naturally arising out of a pardonable enthusiasm. His manners are better than you will generally find, because he belongs to my own gentle craft. You shall tame him, Miss Kennedy.'

Angela said she would try.

'He shall learn to waltz,' Harry went on. 'This will convert him from a fierce Republican to a merely enthusiastic Radical. Then he shall learn to sing in parts: this will drop him down into advanced Liberalism. And if you can persuade him to attend your evenings, talk with the girls, or engage in some Art, say painting, he will become, quite natually, a mere Conservative.'

With some difficulty, Harry persuaded his cousin to come with him. Dick Coppin was not, he said of himself, a dangler after girls' apron-strings, having something else to think of; nor was he attracted by the promise, held out by his cousin, of music and singing. But he came under protest, because music seemed to him an idle thing while the House of Lords remained undestroyed, and because this cousin of his could somehow make him do pretty nearly what he pleased.

He was a man of Harry's own age; a short man, with somewhat rough and rugged features—strong, and not without the beauty of strength. His forehead was broad: he had thick eyebrows, the thick lips of one who speaks much in public, and a straight chin—the chin of obstinacy. His eyes were bright and full: his hair was black: his face was oval: his expression was masterful: it was altogether the face of a man who interested one. Angela thought of his brother, the Captain in the Salvation Army: this man, she felt, had all the courage of the other, with more common sense; yet one who, too, might become a fanatic, who might be dangerous if he took the wrong side. She shook hands with him and welcomed him. Then she said that she wanted dancing men for her evenings, and hoped that he could dance. It was the first time in his life that Mr. Coppin had been asked that question, and also the first time that he had thought it possible that any man in his senses, except a sailor, should be expected to dance. Of course he could not, and said so bluntly, sticking his thumbs in his waistcoat pockets, which is a gesture peculiar to the trade, if you care to notice so small a fact.

'Your cousin,' said Angela, 'will teach you. Mr. Goslett, please give Mr. Coppin a lesson in a quadrille. Nelly, you will be his partner. Now, if you will make up the set, I will play.'

An elderly bishop of Calvinistic principles could not have been more astonished than was this young workman. He had not the presence of mind to refuse. Before he realised his position, he was standing beside his partner; in front of him stood his cousin, also with a partner: four girls made up the set. Then the music began, and he was dragged, pushed, hustled, and pulled this way and that. He would have resented this treatment but that the girls took such pains to set him right, and evidently regarded the lesson as one of the greatest importance. Nor did they cease until he had discerned what the mathematician called the Law of the Quadrille, and could tread the measure with some approach to accuracy.

'We shall not be satisfied, Mr. Coppin,' said Angela, when the Quadrille was finished, 'until we have taught everybody to dance.'

'What is the good of dancing?' he asked good-humouredly, but a good deal humiliated by the struggle.

'Dancing is graceful; dancing is a good exercise; dancing should be natural to young people: dancing is delightful. See—I will play a waltz; now watch the girls.'

She played. Instantly the girls caught each other by the waist and whirled round the room with brightened eyes and parted lips. Harry took Nelly in the close embrace which accompanies the German dance, and swiftly, easily, gracefully, danced round and round the room.

'Is it not happiness that you are witnessing, Mr. Coppin?' asked Angela. 'Tell me, did you ever see dressmakers happy before? You, too, shall learn to waltz. I will teach you, but not to-night.'

Then they left off dancing and sat down, talking and laughing. Harry took his violin and discoursed sweet music, to which they listened or not as they listed. Only the girl who was lame looked on with rapt and eager face.

'See her!' said Angela, pointing her out. 'She has found what her soul was ignorantly desiring. She has found music. Tell me, Mr. Coppin, if it were not for the music and this room, what would that poor child be?'

He made no reply. Never before had he witnessed, never had he suspected, such an evening. There were the girls whom he despised, who laughed and jested with the lads in the street, who talked loud and were foolish. Why, they were changed. What did it mean? And who was this young woman, who looked and spoke as no other woman he had ever met, yet was only a dressmaker?

'I have heard of you, Mr. Coppin,' this young person said, in her queen-like manner, 'and I am glad that you have come. We shall expect you, now, every Saturday evening. I hear that you are a political student.'

'I am a Republican,' he replied. 'That's about what I am.' Again he stuck his thumbs into his waistcoat pockets.

'Yes. You do not perhaps quite understand what it is that we are doing here, do you? In a small way—it is quite a little thing—it may interest even a political student like yourself. The interests of milliners and dressmakers are very small compared with the House of Lords. Still—your sisters and cousins——'

'It seems pleasant,' he replied, 'if you don't all get set up with high notions. As for me, I am for root-and-branch Reform, I am.'

'Yes: but all improvement in Government means improvement of the people, does it not? Else, I see no reason for trying to improve a Government.'

He made no reply. He was so much accustomed to the vague denunciations and cheap rhetoric of his class, that a small practical point was strange to him.

'Now,' said Angela, 'I asked your cousin to bring you here, because I learn that you are a man of great mental activity, and likely, if you are properly directed, to be of great use to us.'

He stared again. Who was this dressmaker who spoke about directing him? The same uncomfortable feeling came over him, a cold doubt about himself, which he often felt when in the society of his cousin. No man likes to feel that he is not perfectly and entirely right, and that he must be right.

'We are a society,' she went on, 'of girls who want to work for ourselves: we all of us belong to your class; we therefore look to you for sympathy and assistance. Yet you hold aloof from us. We have had some support here already, but none from the people who ought most to sympathise with us. That is, I suppose, because you know nothing about us. Very well, then. While your cousin is amusing those girls, I will tell you about our Association.'

. . . . . .

'Now you understand, Mr. Coppin. You men have long since organised yourselves—it is our turn now; and we look to you for help. We are not going to work any longer for a master: we are not going to work long hours any longer: and we are going to get time every day for fresh air, exercise, and amusement. You are continually occupied, I believe, at your Club, in denouncing the pleasures of the rich. But we are actually going to enjoy all those pleasures ourselves, and they will cost us nothing. Look round this room—we have a piano lent to us: there is your cousin with his fiddle, and Captain Sorensen with his: we are learning part-songs, which cost us three-halfpence each: we dance: we play: we read—a subscription to Smith's is only three guineas a year:

we have games which are cheap: the whole expense of our evenings is the fire in winter and the gas. On Saturday evenings we have some cake and lemonade, which one of the girls makes for us. What can rich people have more than society, lights, music, singing, and dancing?'

He was silent, wondering at this thing.

'Don't you see, Mr. Coppin, that if we are successful, we shall be the cause of many more such Associations? Don't you see, that if we could get our principle established, we should accomplish a greater revolution than the overthrow of the Lords and the Church, and one far more beneficial?'

'You can't succeed,' he said. 'It's been tried before.'

'Yes: by men: I know it. And it has always broken down because the leaders were false to their principles and betrayed the cause.'

'Where are the girls to get money to start with?'

'We are fortunate,' Angela replied. 'We have this house and furniture given to us by a lady interested in us. That, I own, is a great thing. But other rich people will be found to do as much. Why, how much better it is than leaving money to hospitals!'

'Rich people!' he echoed with contempt.

'Yes: rich people, of whom you know so little, Mr. Coppin, that I think you ought to be very careful how you speak of them. But think of us, look at the girls. Do they not look happier than they used to look?'

He replied untruthfully, because he was not going to give in to a woman all of a sudden, that he did not remember how they used to look, but that undoubtedly they now looked very well. He did not say—which he felt—that they were behaving more quietly and modestly than he had ever known them to behave.

'You,' Angela went on, with a little emphasis on the pronoun, which made her speech a delicate flattery,—'you, Mr. Coppin, cannot fail to observe how the evening's relaxation helps to raise the whole tone of the girls. The music which they hear sinks into their hearts and lifts them above the little cares of their lives: the dancing makes them merry: the social life, the talk among ourselves, the books they read, all help to maintain a pure and elevated tone of thought—I declare, Mr. Coppin, I no longer know these girls. And then they bring their friends, and so their influence spreads. They will not, I hope, remain in the workrooms all their lives. A woman should be married, do not you think so, Mr. Coppin?'

He was too much astonished at the whole conversation to make any coherent reply.

'I think you have perhaps turned your attention too much to politics, have you not? Yet practical questions ought to interest you.'

'They say, at the Club,' he answered, 'that this place is a sham and a humbug.'

'Will you bring your friends here to show them that it is not?'

'Harry stood up for you the other night. He's plucky, and they like him for all he looks a swell.'

'Does he speak at your club?'

'Sometimes—not to say speak. He gets up after the speech, and says so and so is wrong. Yet they like him—because he isn't afraid to say what he thinks. They call him "Gentleman Jack."'

'I thought he was a brave man,' said Angela, looking at Harry, who was rehearsing some story to the delight of Nelly and the girls.

'Yes—the other night they were talking about you, and one said one thing, and one said another, and a chap said he thought he'd seen you in a West End music-hall, and he didn't believe you were any better than you should be.'

'Oh!' She shrank as if she had been struck some blow.

'He didn't say it twice. After he'd knocked him down, Harry invited that chap to stand up and have it out. But he wouldn't.'

It was a great misfortune for Harry that he lost the soft and glowing look of gratitude and admiration which was quite wasted upon him. For he was at the very point, the critical point, of the story.

Angela had made another convert. When Dick Coppin went home that night, he was humbled but pensive. Here was a thing of which he had never thought—and here was a woman the like of whom he had never imagined. The House of Lords, the Church, the Land Laws, presented no attraction that night for his thoughts. For the first time in his life, he felt the influence of a woman.

CHAPTER XX.

DOWN ON THEIR LUCK.

ENGAGED in these pursuits, neither Angela nor Harry paid much heed to the circle at the Boarding House, where they were still nominally boarders. For Angela was all day long at her Association, and her general assistant, or Prime Minister, after a hasty breakfast, hastened to his daily labour. He found that he was left entirely to his own devices; work came in which he did or left undone, Miss Messenger's instructions were faithfully carried out, and his independence was respected. During work-time he planned amusements and surprises for Miss Kennedy and her girls, or he meditated upon the Monotony of Man, a subject which I may possibly explain later on; or when he knocked off, he would go and see the draymen roll about the heavy casks as if they were footballs: or he would watch the machinery and look at the great brown mass of boiling hops, or he would drop suddenly upon his cousin Josephus, and observe him faithfully entering names, ticking off and comparing, just as he had done for forty years, still a Junior Clerk. But he gave no thought to the Boarders.

One evening, however, in late September, he happened to look in towards nine o'clock, the hour when the frugal supper was generally spread. The usual occupants of the room were there, but there was no supper on the table, and the landlady was absent.

Harry stood in the doorway, with his hands in his pockets, carelessly looking at the group. Suddenly he became aware, with a curious sinking of heart, that something was gone wrong with all of them. They were all silent, all sitting bolt upright, no one taking the least notice of his neighbour, and all apparently in some physical pain.

The illustrious Pair were in their usual places, but his lordship, instead of looking sleepy and sleepily content, as was his custom, at the evening hour, sat bolt upright and thrummed the arm of his chair with his fingers, restless and ill at ease; opposite to him sat his consort, her hands tightly clasped, her bright beady eyes gleaming with impatience, which might at any moment break out into wrath. Yet the Case was completely drawn up, as Harry knew, because he had finished it himself, and it only remained to make a clean copy before it was 'sent in' to the Lord Chancellor.

As for the Professor, he was seated at the window, his legs curled under the chair, looking moodily across Stepney Green—into space, and neglecting his experiments. His generally cheerful face wore an anxious expression, as if he was thinking of something unpleasant, which would force itself upon his attention.

Josephus was in his corner, without his pipe, and more than usually melancholy. His sadness always, however, increased in the evening, so that he hardly counted.

Daniel, frowning like a Rhine Baron of the good old time, had his books before him, but they were closed. It was a bad sign that even the Version in the Hebrew had no attraction for him.

Mr. Maliphant alone was smiling. His smiles, in such an assemblage of melancholy faces, produced an incongruous effect. The atmosphere was charged with gloom: it was funereal: in the midst of it the gay and cheerful countenance, albeit wrinkled, of the old man, beamed like the sun impertinently shining amid fog and rain, sleet and snow. The thing was absurd. Harry felt the force of Miss Kennedy's remark that the occupants of the room reminded her of a fortuitous concourse of flies, or of ants, or rooks, or people in an omnibus, each of whom was profoundly occupied with its own affairs and careless of its neighbours. Out of six in the room, five were unhappy: they did not ask for, or expect, the sympathies of their neighbours: they did not reveal their anxieties: they sat and suffered in silence: the sixth alone was quite cheerful: it was nothing to him what experiences the rest were having, whether they were enjoying the sweetness of the upper airs, or enduring hardness. He sat in his own place near the Professor: he laughed aloud: he even talked and told stories, to which no one listened. When Harry appeared, he was just ending a story which he had never begun.

'So it was given to the other fellow. And he came from Baxter Street, close to the City Hall, which is generally allowed to be the wickedest street in New York City.'

He paused a little, laughed cheerfully, rubbed his dry old hands together, smoked his pipe in silence, and then concluded his story, having filled up the middle in his own mind, without speech.

'And so he took to the coasting trade off the Andes.'

Harry caught the eye of the Professor, and beckoned him to come outside.

'Now,' he said, taking his arm, 'what the devil is the matter with all of you?'

The Professor smiled feebly under the gas lamp in the street, and instantly relapsed into his anxious expression.

'I suppose,' he said—'that is, I guess, because they haven't told me—that it's the same with them as with me.'

'And that is——?'

The Professor slapped his empty pockets.

'Want of cash,' he said. 'I'm used to it in the autumn, just before the engagements begin. Bless you! It's nothing to me. Though, when you've had no dinner for a week, you do begin to feel as if you could murder and roast a cat, if no one was looking. I've even begun to wish that the Eighth Commandment was suspended during the autumn.'

'Do you mean, man, that you are all hungry?'

'All except old Maliphant, and he doesn't count. Josephus had some dinner yesterday, but he says he can't afford supper and dinner too at the rate his heels wear out. Yes, I don't suppose there's been a dinner a-piece among us for the last week.'

'Good Heavens!' Harry hurried off to find the landlady.

She was in the kitchen sitting before the fire, though it was a warm night. She looked up when her lodger entered, and Harry observed that she, too, wore an air of dejection.

'Well, Mrs. Bormalack?'

She groaned and wiped away a tear.

'My heart bleeds for them, Mr. Goslett,' she said. 'I can't bear to set eyes on them: I can't face them. Because to do what I should like to do for them, would be nothing short of ruin. And how to send them away I cannot tell.'

He nodded his head encouragingly.

'You are a young man, Mr. Goslett, and you don't consider—and you are thinking day and night of that sweet young thing, Miss Kennedy. And she of you. Oh! you needn't blush: a handsome young fellow like you is a prize for any woman, however good-looking. Besides, I've got eyes.'

'Still, that does not help us much to the point, Mrs. Bormalack, which is, what can we do for them?'

'Oh, dear me! the poor things don't board and lodge any more, Mr. Goslett. They've had no board to-day. If I did what I should like to do—but I can't. There's the rent and rates and all. And how I can keep them in the house, unless they pay their rent, I can't tell. I've never been so miserable since Captain Saffrey went away, owing for three months.'

'Not enough to eat?'

'Lady Davenant came to me this morning, and paid the rent for this week, but *not the board:* said that her nephew Nathaniel hadn't sent the six dollars, and they could only have breakfast, and must find some cheap place for dinner somewhere else. In the middle of the day they went out. Her ladyship put quite a chirpy face upon it: said they were going into the city to get dinner, but his lordship groaned. Dinner! They came home at two, and his groans have been heartrending all the afternoon. I never heard such groaning.'

'Poor old man!'

'And there's the Professor, too. It's low water with him. No one wants conjuring till winter comes. But he's quite used to go without his dinner. You needn't mind him!'

'Eels,' said Harry, 'are used to being skinned. Yet they wriggle a bit.'

He produced a few coins and proffered a certain request to the landlady. Then he returned to his fellow-lodgers.

Presently there was heard in the direction of the kitchen a cheerful hissing, followed by a perfectly divine fragrance. Daniel closed his eyes, and leaned back in his chair. The Professor smiled. His lordship rolled in his chair and groaned. Presently Mrs. Bormalack appeared, and the cloth was laid. His lordship showed signs of an increasing agitation. The fragrance increased. He leaned forward clutching the arm of his chair, looking to his wife as if for help and guidance at this most difficult crisis. He was frightfully hungry: all his dinner had been a biscuit and a half, his wife having taken the other half. What is a biscuit and a half to one accustomed to the flesh-pots of Canaan City?

'Clara Martha,' he groaned, trying to whisper, but failing in his agitation, 'I must have some of that beefsteak or I shall——'

Here he relapsed into silence again.

It was not from a desire to watch the sufferings of the unlucky Peer, or in order to laugh at them, that Harry hesitated to invite him. Now, however, he hesitated no longer.

'I am giving a little supper to-night, Lady Davenant, to—to—celebrate my birthday. May I hope that you and his lordship will join us?'

Her ladyship most affably accepted.

Well: they were fed; they made up for the meagreness of the midday meal by such a supper as should be chronicled, so large, so generous was it. Such a supper, said the Professor, as should carry a man along for a week, were it not for the foolish habit of getting hungry twice at least in the four-and-twenty hours. After supper they all became cheerful, and presently went to bed as happy as if there were no to-morrow, and the next day's dinner was assured.

When they were gone, Harry began to smoke his evening pipe. Then he became aware of the presence of the two who were left—his cousin Josephus and old Mr. Maliphant.

The former was sitting in gloomy silence, and the latter was making as if he would say something, but thought better of it, and smiled instead.

'Josephus,' said Harry, 'what the devil makes you so gloomy? You can't be hungry still?'

'No,' he replied. 'It isn't that: a junior clerk fifty-five years old has no right to get hungry.'

'What is it, then?'

'They talk of changes in the office, that is all. Some of the juniors will be promoted; not me, of course; and some will have to go. After forty years in the Brewery, I shall have to go. That's all.'

'Seems rough, doesn't it? Can't you borrow a handful of malt, and set up a little Brewery for yourself?'

'It is only starvation. After all, it doesn't matter—nobody cares what happens to a junior clerk. There are plenty more. And the workhouse is said to be well managed. Perhaps they will let me keep their accounts.'

'When do you think—the—the reduction will be made?'

'Next month, they say.'

'Come, cheer up, old man,' said his cousin. 'Why, if they do turn you out—which would be a burning shame—you can find something better.'

'No,' replied Josephus, sadly, 'I know my place. I am a junior clerk. They can be got to do my work at seven bob a week. Ah! in thousands.'

'Well, but can't you do anything else?'

'Nothing else.'

'In all these years, man, have you learned nothing at all?'

'Nothing at all.'

Is there, thought Harry, gazing upon his luckless cousin, a condition more miserable than that of the cheap clerk? In early life he learns to spell, to read, to write, and perhaps to keep books, but this only if he is ambitious. Here his education ends: he has no desire to learn anything more: he falls into whatever place he can get, and then he begins a life in which there is no hope of preferment and no endeavour after better things. There are, in every civilised country, thousands and thousands of these helpless and hopeless creatures: they mostly suffer in silence, being at the best ill-fed and ill-paid: but they sometimes utter a feeble moan, when one of them can be found with vitality enough, about their pay and prospects; no one has yet told them the honest truth, that they are already paid as much as they deserve: that their miserable accomplishments cannot for a moment be compared with the skill of an artisan: that they are self-condemned because they make no effort. They have not even the energy to make a Union: they have not the sense of self-protection: they are content, if they are not hungry, if they have tobacco to smoke and beer to drink.

'How long is it since you—did—whatever it was you did, that kept you down?' asked the younger man, at length.

'I did nothing. It was an accident. Unless,' added Josephus with a smile,—'unless it was the Devil. But devils don't care to meddle with junior clerks.'

'What was the accident, then?'

'It was one day in June; I remember the day, quite well. I was alone in my office, the same office as I am in still. The others, younger than myself, and I was then twenty-one, were gone off on business. The safe stood close to my desk. There was a bundle of papers in it sealed up, and marked "Mr. Messenger, Private," which had been there a goodish while, so that I suppose they were not important: some of the books were there as well, and Mr. Messenger himself had sent down, only an hour before . . . before . . . it happened, a packet of notes to be paid into the bank. The money had been brought in by our country collectors—fourteen thousand pounds, in country bank-notes. Now remember, I was sitting at the desk and the safe was locked, and the keys were in the desk, and no one was in the office except me. And I will swear that the notes were in the safe. I told Mr. Messenger that I would take my oath to it, and I would still.' Josephus grew almost animated as he approached the important point in his history.

'Well?'

'Things being so—remember, no one but me in the office, and the keys——'

'I remember. Get along.'

'I was sent for.'

'By Mr. Messenger?'

'Mr. Messenger didn't sent for junior clerks. He used to send for the Heads of Departments, who sent for the chief clerks who ordered the juniors. That was the way in those days. No, I was sent for to the chief clerk's office and given a packet of letters for copying. That took three minutes. When I came back the office was still empty, the safe was locked and the keys in my desk.'

'Well?'

'Well—but the safe was empty!'

'What! all the money gone?'

'All gone, every farthing—with Mr. Messenger's private papers.'

'What a strange thing!'

'No one saw anybody going into the office or coming out. Nothing else was taken.'

'Come—with 14,000*l.* in his hand, no reasonable thief would ask for more.'

'And what is more extraordinary still, not one of those notes has ever since been presented for payment.'

'And then, I suppose, there was a row.'

Josephus assented.

'First, I was to be sacked at once; then I was to be watched and searched; next, I was to be kept on until the notes were presented and the thief caught. I have been kept on; the notes have not been presented; and I've had the same pay, neither more nor less, all the time. That's all the story. Now there's to be an end of that. I'm to be sent away.'

Mr. Maliphant had not been listening to the story at all, being pleasantly occupied with his own reminiscences. At this point one of them made him laugh and rub his hands.

'When Mr. Messenger's father married Susannah Coppin, I have heard——'

Here he stopped.

'Hallo!' cried Harry. 'Go on, Venerable. Why, we are cousins or nephews, or something, of Miss Messenger. Josephus, my boy, cheer up!'

Mr. Maliphant's memory now jumped over two generations, and he went on.

'Caroline Coppin married a sergeant in the army, and a handsome lad—I forget his name. But Mary Coppin married Bunker. The Coppins were a good old Whitechapel stock, as good as the Messengers. As for Bunker, he was an upstart, he was; and came from Barking, as I always understood.'

Then he was once more silent.

CHAPTER XXI.

LADY DAVENANT.

It was a frequent custom with Lady Davenant to sit with the girls in the work-room in the morning. She liked to have a place where she could talk; she took an ex-professional interest in their occupation; she had the eye of an artist for their interpretation of the fashion. Moreover, it pleased her to be in the company of Miss Kennedy, who was essentially a woman's woman. Men who are so unhappy as to have married a man's woman will understand perfectly what I mean. On the morning after Harry's most providential birthday, therefore, when she appeared, no one was in the least disturbed. But to-day she did not greet the girls with her accustomed stately inclination of the head, which implied that, although now a Peeress, she had been brought up to their profession and in a Republican School of Thought, and did not set herself up above her neighbours. Yet respect to rank should be conceded, and was expected. In general, too, she was talkative, and enlivened the tedium of work with many an anecdote illustrating Canaan City and its ways, or showing the lethargic manners of the Davenants, both her husband and his father, to say nothing of the grandfather, contented with the lowly occupation of a wheelwright, while he might have soared to the British House of Lords. This morning, however, she sat down and was silent, and her head drooped. Angela, who sat next her and watched, presently observed that a tear formed in her eye and dropped upon her work, and that her lips moved as if she was holding a conversation with herself. Thereupon she arose, put her hand upon the poor lady's arm, and drew her away without a word to the solitude of the dining-room, where her ladyship gave way and burst into an agony of sobbing.

Angela stood before her saying nothing. It was best to let the fit have its way. When the crying was nearly over, she laid her hand upon her hair and gently smoothed it.

'Poor dear lady!' she said. 'Will you tell me what has happened?'

'Everything,' she gasped. 'Oh! everything. The six months are gone, all but one. Nephew Nathaniel writes to say that as we haven't even made a start, all this time, he reckons we don't count to make any, and he's got children, and as for business, it's got down to the hard pan, and dollars are skurce, and we may come back again right away, and there's the money for the voyage home whenever we like, but no more.'

'Oh!' said Angela, beginning to understand. 'And . . . and your husband?'

'There's where the real trouble begins. I wouldn't mind for myself, money or no money. I would write to the Queen for money. I would go to the workhouse. I would beg my bread in the street, but the Case I never would give up—never—never—never.'

She clasped her hands, dried her eyes, and sat bolt upright, the picture of unyielding determination.

'And your husband is not, perhaps, so resolute as yourself?'

'He says, "Clara Martha, let us go hum. As for the title, I would sell it to nephew Nathaniel, who's the next heir, for a week of square meals; he should have the coronet, if I'd got it, for a month's certainty of steaks and chops and huckleberry pie; and as for my seat in the House of Lords, he should have it for our old cottage in Canaan City, which is sold, and the school which I've given up and lost." He says: "Pack the box, Clara Martha—there isn't much to pack—and we will go at once. If the American minister won't take up the Case for us, I guess that Case may slide till Nathaniel takes it up for himself." That is what he says, Miss Kennedy. Those were his words. Oh! Oh! Oh! Mr. Feeblemind! Oh! Mr. Facing-Both-Ways!'

She wrung her hands in despair, for it seemed as if her husband would be proof against even the scorn and contempt of these epithets.

'But what do you mean to do?'

'I shall stay,' she replied. 'And so shall he, if my name is Lady Davenant. Do you think I am going back to Canaan City to be scorned by Aurelia Tucker? Do you think I shall let that poor old man, who has his good side, Miss Kennedy—and as for virtue he is an angel, and knows not the taste of tobacco or whisky—face his nephew, and have to say what good he has done with all those dollars? No, here we stay.' She snapped her lips, and made as if she would take root upon that very chair. 'Shall he part with his birthright like Esau, because he is hungry? Never! The curse of Esau would rest upon us.'

'He's at home now,' she went on, 'preparing for another day without dinner; groans won't help him now; and this time there will be no supper—unless Mr. Goslett has another birthday.'

'Why! Good gracious! you will be starved.'

'Better starve than go home as we came. Besides, I shall write to the Queen when there's nothing left. When Nathaniel's money comes, which may be to-morrow, and may be next month, I shall give a month's rent to Mrs. Bormalack, and save the rest for one meal a day. Yes, as long as the money lasts, he shall eat meat—once a day—at noon. He's been pampered, like all the Canaan City folk; set up with turkey roast and turkey boiled, and ducks and beef every day, and buckwheat cakes and such! Oh! a change of diet will bring down his luxury and increase his pride.'

Angela thought that starvation was a new way of developing pride of birth, but she did not say so.

'Is there no way,' she asked, 'in which he can earn money?'

She shook her head.

'As a teacher he was generally allowed to be learned but sleepy. In our city, however, the boys and girls didn't expect too much, and it's a sleepy place. In winter, they sit round the stove and they go to sleep; in summer, they sit in the shade and they go to sleep. It's the sleepiest place in the States. No, there's no kind o' way in which he can earn any money. And if there were, did you ever hear of a British Peer working for his daily bread?'

'But you, Lady Davenant? Surely your ladyship would not mind—if the chance offered—if it were a thing kept secret—if not even your husband knew—would not object to earning something every week to find that square meal which your husband so naturally desires?'

Her ladyship held out her hands, without a word.

Angela, in shameful contempt of Political Economy, placed in them the work which she had in her own, and whispered:

'You had better,' she said, 'take a week in advance. Then you can arrange with Mrs. Bormalack for the usual meals on the old terms; and if you would rather come here to work, you can have this room to yourself all the morning. Thank you, Lady Davenant. The obligation is entirely mine, you know. For, really, more delicate work, more beautiful work, I never saw. Do all American ladies work so beautifully?'

Her ladyship, quite overcome with these honeyed words, took the work and made no reply.

'Only one thing, dear Lady Davenant,' Angela went on, smiling. 'You must promise me not to work too hard. You know that such work as yours is worth at least twice as much as mine. And then you can push on the Case, you know.'

The little lady rose, and threw her arms round Angela's neck.

'My dear!' she cried, with more tears. 'You are everybody's friend. Oh! yes, I know. And how you do it and all—I can't think, nor Mrs. Bormalack neither. But the day may come—it *shall* come—when we can show our gratitude.'

She retired, taking the work with her.

Her husband was asleep as usual, for he had had breakfast, and as yet the regular pangs of noon were not active. The Case was not spread out before him, as was usual, ever since Mr. Goslett had taken it in hand. It was ostentatiously rolled up, and laid on the table, as if packed ready for departure by the next mail.

His wife regarded him with a mixture of affection and contempt.

'He would sell the Crown of England,' she murmured, 'for roast turkey and apple fixin's. The Davenants couldn't have been always like that. It must be his mother's blood. Yet she was a Church-member, and walked consistent.'

She did not wake him up, but sought out Mrs. Bormalack, and presently there was a transfer of coins and the Resurrection of Smiles and *Doux Parler*, that Fairy of Sweet Speech, who cowers and hides beneath the cold wind of poverty.'

'Tell me, Mr. Goslett,' said Angela that evening, still thinking over the sad lot of the claimants; 'tell me: you have examined the claim of these people—what chance have they?'

'I should say, none whatever.'

'Then what makes them so confident of success?'

'Hush! listen. They are not really confident. His noble lordship perfectly understands the weakness of his claim, which depends upon a pure assumption, as you shall hear. As for the little lady, his wife, she has long since jumped to the conclusion that the assumption requires no proof. Therefore, save in moments of dejection, she is pretty confident. Then, they are hopelessly ignorant of how they should proceed, and of the necessary delays, even if their Case was unanswerable. They thought they had only to cross the ocean and send in a statement in order to get admitted to the rank and privilege of the peerage. And I believe they think that the Queen will, in some mysterious way, restore the property to them.'

'Poor things!'

'Yes, it's rather sad to think of such magnificent expectations. Besides, it really is a most beautiful case. The last Lord Davenant had one son. That only son grew up, had some quarrel with his father, and sailed from the Port of Bristol bound for some American port—I forget which. Neither he nor his ship was ever heard of again. Therefore the title became extinct.'

'Well?'

'Very good. Now the story begins. His name was Timothy Clitheroe Davenant, the name always given to the eldest son of the family. Now, our friend's name is Timothy Clitheroe Davenant, and so was his father's, and so was his grandfather's.'

'That is very strange.'

'It is very strange—what is stranger still is, that his grandfather was born, according to the date on his tomb, the same year as the lost heir, and at the same place—Davenant, where was the family seat.'

'Can there have been two of the same name born in the same place and in the same year?'

'It seems improbable, almost impossible. Moreover, the last lord had no brother, nor had his father, the second lord. I found that out at the Herald's College. Consequently, even if there were another branch, and the birth of two Timothys in the same year was certain, they would not get the title. So that their one hope is to be able to prove what they call the Connection. That is to say, the identity of the lost heir with this wheelwright.'

'That seems a very doubtful thing to do, after all these years.'

'It is absolutely impossible, unless some documents are discovered which prove it. But nothing remains of the wheelwright.'

'No book? No papers?'

'Nothing, except a small book of songs, supposed to be convivial, with his name on the inside cover, written in a sprawling hand, and misspelt with two v's,—"Davvenant," and above the name, in the same hand, the day of the week in which it was written, "Satturday," with two tt's. No Christian name.'

'Does it not seem as if the absence of the Christian name would point to the assumption of the title?'

'Yes: they do not know this, and I have not yet told them. It is, however, a very small point, and quite insufficient in itself to establish anything.'

'Yes,' Angela mused. She was thinking whether something could not be done to help these poor people and settle the case decisively for them one way or the other. 'What is to be the end of it?'

Harry shrugged his shoulders.

'Who knows how long they can go on? When there are no more dollars, they must go home again. I hear they have got another supply of money: Mrs. Bormalack has been paid for a fortnight in advance. After that is gone—perhaps they had better go too.'

'It seems a pity,' said Angela, slightly reddening at mention of the money, 'that some researches could not be made, so as to throw a little light upon this strange coincidence of names.'

'We should want to know first what to look for. After that, we should have to find a man to conduct the search. And then we should have to pay him.'

'As for the man, there is the Professor: as for the place, first there is the Herald's College, and secondly, there are the parish registers of the village of Davenant; and as for the money, why, it would not cost much, and I believe something might be advanced for them. If you and I, Mr. Goslett, between us, were to pay the Professor's expenses, would he go about for us?'

She seemed to assume that he was quite ready to join her in giving his money for this object. Yet Harry was now living, having refused his guardian's proffered allowance, on his pay by the piece, which gave him, as already stated, tenpence for every working hour.

'What would the Professor cost?' she asked.

'The Professor is down upon his luck,' said Harry. 'He is so hard up at present that I believe we could get him for nothing but his expenses. Eighteen shillings a week would buy him outright until his engagements begin again. If there were any travelling expenses, of course that would be an extra. But the village of Davenant is not a great way off. It is situated in Essex, and Essex is but a suburb of London, its original name having been East-End-seaxas, which is not generally known.'

'Very well,' she replied gravely. 'That would be only nine shillings a-piece, say eleven hours of extra work for you: and probably it would not last long, more than a week or two. Will you give two hours a day to his lordship?'

Harry made a wry face, and laughed. This young person had begun by turning him into a journeyman cabinet-maker, and was now making him work extra time. What next?

'Am I not your slave, Miss Kennedy?'

'Oh! Mr. Goslett! I thought there was to be no more nonsense of that kind. You know it can lead to nothing—even if you desired that it should.'

'Even? Miss Kennedy, can't you see——'

'No—I can see nothing—I will hear nothing. Do not—oh, Mr. Goslett—we have been—we are—such excellent friends. You have been so great a help to me: I look to you for so much more. Do not spoil all: do not seek for what could never be: pray—pray do not.'

She spoke with so much earnestness: her eyes were filled with such a frankness: she laid her hand upon his arm with so charming a *camaraderie*, that he could not choose but obey.

'It is truly wonderful,' he said, thinking, for the thousandth time, how this pearl among women came to Stepney Green.

'What is wonderful?' she blushed as she asked.

'You know what I mean. Let us both be frank. You command me not to say the thing I most desire to say. Very good. I will be content to wait, but under one promise——'

'What is that?'

'If the reason or reasons which command my silence should ever be removed—mind, I do not seek to know what they are—you will yourself——'

'What?' she asked, blushing sweetly.

'You will yourself—tell me so.'

She recovered her composure and gave him her hand.

'If, at any time, I *can* listen to you, I will tell you so. Does that content you?'

Certainly not: but there was no more to be got; therefore, Harry was fain to be contented, whether he would or not. And this was only one of a hundred little skirmishes in which he endeavoured to capture an advanced fort or prepared to lay the siege in form. And always he was routed with heavy loss.

'And now,' she went on, 'we will get back to our Professor.'

'Yes. I am to work two extra hours a day that he may go about in the luxury of eighteen shillings a week. This it is to be one of the horny-handed. What is the Professor to do first?'

'Let us first,' she said, 'find him and secure his services.'

It has been seen that the Professor was already come to the period of waist-tightening, which naturally follows a too continued succession of banyan days.

He listened with avidity to any proposition which held forth a prospect of food. The work, he said, only partly understanding it, would be difficult, but therefore the more to be desired. Common conjurers, he said, would spoil such a case. As for himself, he would undertake to do just whatever they wanted with the register, whether it was the substitution of a page or the tearing out of a page, under the very eyes of the parish clerk. 'There must be,' he said, 'a patter suitable to the occasion. I will manage that for you. I'm afraid I can't make up as I ought for the part, because it would cost too much, but we must do without that. And now, Miss Kennedy, what is it exactly that you want me to do?'

He was disappointed on learning that there would be no 'palming' of leaves, old or new, among the registers: nothing, in fact, but a simple journey and a simple examination of the books. And though, as he confessed, he had as yet no experience in the art of falsifying parish registers, where science was concerned its interests were above those of mere morality.

CHAPTER XXII.

DANIEL FAGG.

WHAT would have happened if certain things had not happened? This is a question which is seldom set in examination papers, on account of the great scope it offers to the imaginative faculty, and we all know how dangerous a thing it is to develop this side of the human mind. Many a severe historian has been spoiled by developing his imagination. But for this, Scott might have been another Alison, and Thackeray a Mill. In this Stepney business the appearance of Angela certainly worked changes at once remarkable and impossible to be dissociated from her name. Thus, but for her, the unfortunate claimants must have been driven back to their own country like baffled invaders 'rolling sullenly over the frontier.' Nelly would have spent her whole life in the sadness of short rations and long hours, with hopeless prayers for days of fatness. Rebekah and the improvers and the dressmakers and the apprentices would have endured the like hardness. Harry would have left the Joyless City to its joylessness, and returned to the regions whose skies are all sunshine—to the young and fortunate—and its pavements all of gold. And there would have been no Palace of Delight. And what would have become of Daniel Fagg, one hardly likes to think. The unlucky Daniel had, indeed, fallen upon very evil days. There seemed to be no longer a single man left whom he could ask for a subscription to his book. He had used them all up. He had sent begging letters to every Fellow of every Scientific Society: he had levied contributions upon every Secretary: he had attacked in person every official at the Museums of Great Russell Street and South Kensington: he had tried all the publishers: he had written to every bishop, nobleman, clergyman, and philanthropist of whom he could hear, pressing upon them the claims of his great Discovery. Now he could do no more. The subscriptions he had received for publishing his book were spent in necessary food and lodging: nobody at the Museum would even see him: he got no more answers to his letters: starvation stared him in the face.

For three days he had lived upon ninepence. Threepence a day for food. Think of that, ye who are fed regularly, and fed well. Threepence to satisfy all the cravings of an excellent appetite! There was now no more money left. And in two days more the week's rent would be due.

On the morning when he came forth, hungry and miserable, without even a penny for a loaf, it happened that Angela was standing at her upper window on the other side of the Green, and, fortunately for the unlucky scholar, she saw him. His strange behaviour made her watch him. First, he looked up and down the street in uncertainty: then, as if he had business which could not be delayed a moment, he turned to the right and marched straight away towards the Mile End Road. This was because he thought he would go to the Head of the Egyptian Department at the British Museum and borrow five shillings. Then he stopped suddenly: this was because he remembered that he would have to send in his name, and that the Chief would certainly refuse to see him. Then he turned slowly and walked, dragging his limbs and hanging his head, in the opposite direction—because he was resolved to make for the London Docks, and drop accidentally into the sluggish green water, the first drop of which kills almost as certainly as a glass of Bourbon whisky. Then he thought that there would be some luxury in sitting down for a few moments to think comfortably over his approaching demise, and of the noise it would make in the learned world, and how remorseful and ashamed the scholars—especially he of the Egyptian Department—would feel for the short balance of their sin-laden days, and he took a seat on a bench in the Green garden with this view. As he thought he leaned forward, staring into vacancy, and in his face there grew so dark an expression of despair and terror, that Angela shuddered and ran for her hat, recollecting that she had heard of his poverty and his disappointments.

'I am afraid you are not well, Mr. Fagg.'

He started and looked up. In imagination he was already lying dead at the bottom of the green water, and before his troubled mind there were floating confused images of his former life, now past and dead and gone. He saw himself in his Australian cottage arriving at his grand Discovery: he was lecturing about it on a platform ; he was standing on the deck of a ship, drinking farewell nobblers with an enthusiastic crowd; and he was wandering hungry, neglected, despised, about the stony streets of London.

'Well? No: I am not well,' he replied presently, understanding things a little.

'Is it distress of mind or of body, Mr. Fagg?'

'Yesterday it was both; to-night it will be both ; just now it is only one.'

'Which one?'

'Mind,' he replied fiercely, refusing to acknowledge that he was starving. He threw his hat back, dashed his subscription book to the ground, and banged the unoffending bench with his fist.

'As for Mind,' he went on, 'it's a pity I was born with any. I wish I'd had no more Mind than my neighbours. It's Mind, and nothing else, that has brought me to this.'

'What is this, Mr. Fagg?'

'Nothing to you. Go your ways; you are young; you have yet your hopes, which may come to nothing, same as mine; even though they are not, like mine, hopes of Glory and Learning. There's Mr. Goslett in love with you; what is Mind to you?

Nothing. And you in love with him. Very likely he'll go off with another woman, and then you'll find out what it is to be disappointed. What is Mind to anybody? Nothing. Do they care for it in the Museum? No. Does the head of the Egyptian Department care for it? Not he; not a bit. It's a cruel and a selfish country.'

'Oh, Mr. Fagg!' She disregarded his allusion to herself, though it was sufficiently downright.

'Yes; but I will be revenged. I will do something—yes—something that shall tell all Australia how I have been wronged; the colony of Victoria shall ring with my story. It shall sap their loyalty; they shall grow discontented; they will import more Irishmen; there shall be separation. Yes; my friends shall demand separation in revenge for my treatment.'

'It is Christian to forgive, Mr. Fagg.'

'I will forgive, when I have had my revenge. No one shall say I am vindictive. Ah!'—he heaved a profound sigh. 'They gave me a dinner before I came away; they drank my health; they all told me of the reception I should get, and the glory that awaited me. Look at me now. Not one penny in my pocket. Not one man who believes in the Discovery. Wherefore I may truly say that it is better to be born without a brain.'

'This is your subscription book, I believe.' She took it and turned over its pages.

'Come, Mr. Fagg, you have come to the fifty-first copy of the book. Fifty-one copies ordered beforehand does not look like disbelief. May I add my name? That will make fifty-two. Twelve shillings and sixpence, I see. Oh, I shall look forward with the greatest interest to the appearance of the book, I assure you. Yet, you must not expect of a dressmaker much knowledge of Hebrew, Mr. Fagg. You great scholars must be contented with the simple admiration of ignorant work-girls.' He was too far gone in misery to be easily soothed, but he began to wish he had not said that cruel thing about possible desertion by her lover.

'Admiration!' he echoed with a hollow groan. 'And yesterday nothing to eat farther than threepence; and the day before the same; and the day before that. In Australia, when I was in the shoemaking line, there was always plenty to eat. Starvation, I suppose, goes to the brain. And is the cause of suicide, too. I know a beautiful place in the London Docks, where the water's green with minerals. I shall go there.' He pushed his hands deeper into his pockets, while his bushy eyebrows frowned so horribly that two children who were playing in the walk screamed with terror and fled without stopping. 'That water poisons a man directly he drops into it. It's surer and quicker than drowning, and doesn't hurt so much.'

'Come, Mr. Fagg,' said Angela, 'we allow something for the superior activity of great minds; but we must not talk of despair when there should be nothing beyond a little despondency.'

He shook his head.

'Too much reading has probably disordered your digestion, Mr. Fagg. You want rest and society, with sympathy—a woman's sympathy. Scholars, perhaps, are sometimes jealous.'

'Reading has emptied my purse,' he said. 'Sympathy won't fill it.'

'I do not know. Sympathy is a wonderful medicine sometimes. It works miracles. I think, Mr. Fagg, you had better let me pay my subscription in advance. You can give me the change when you please.'

She placed a sovereign in his hand. His fingers clutched it greedily; then his conscience smote him; her kind words, her flattery, touched his heart.

'I cannot take it,' he said. 'Mr. Goslett warned me not to take your money. Besides'—he gasped and pointed to the subscription list. 'Fifty-one names! They've all paid their money for printing the book. I've eaten up all the money, and I shall eat up yours as well. Take the sovereign back. I can starve. When I am dead, I would rather be remembered for my Discovery than for a shameful devourer of subscription money.'

She took him by the arm and led him, unresisting, to the Establishment. 'We must look after you, Mr. Fagg,' she said. 'Now, I have got a beautiful room, where no one sits all day long except sometimes a crippled girl and sometimes myself. In the evening the girls have it. You may bring your books there if you like, and sit there to work, when you please. And by the way,' she added this as if it were a matter of the very least consequence, hardly worth mentioning, 'if you would like to join us any day at dinner—we take our simple meal at one—the girls, no doubt, will all think it a great honour to have so distinguished a scholar at table with them.'

Mr. Fagg blushed with pleasure. Why, if the British Museum people treated him with contumely, if nobody would subscribe to his book, if he was weary of asking and being refused, here was a haven of refuge where he would receive some of the honour due to a scholar.

'And now that you are here, Mr. Fagg,' said Angela, when he had broken bread and given thanks, 'you shall tell me all about your Discovery. Because, you see, we are so ignorant, we girls of the working classes, that I do not exactly know what is your Discovery.'

He sat down and asked for a piece of paper. With this assistance he began his exposition.

'I was drawn to my investigation,' he said solemnly, 'by a little old book about the wisdom of the ancients. That is now five years ago, and I was then fifty-five years of age. No time to be lost, says I to myself, if anything is to be done. The more I read and the more I thought—I was in the shoemaking trade, and I'm not ashamed to own it, for it's a fine business for such as are born with a head for thinking—the more I thought, I say, the more I was puzzled. For there seemed to me no way possible of reconciling what the scholars said.'

'You have not told me the subject of your research, yet.'

'Antiquity,' he replied grandly. 'All antiquity was the subject of my research. First, I read about the Egyptians, and the hieroglyphics. Then I got hold of a new book all about the Assyrians and the cuneiform character.'

'I see,' said Angela. 'You were attracted by the ancient inscriptions?'

'Naturally; without inscriptions, where are you? The scholars said this, and the scholars said that. They talked of reading the Egyptian language, and the Assyrian, and the Median, and what not. That wouldn't do for me.'

The audacity of the little man excited Angela's curiosity, which had been languid.

'Pray go on,' she said.

'The scholars have the same books to go to as me. Yet they don't go. They've eyes as good, but they won't use them. Now follow me, Miss, and you'll be surprised. When Abraham went down into Egypt, did he understand their language or didn't he?'

'Why, I suppose—at least, it is not said that he did not.'

'Of course he did. When Joseph went there, did he understand them? Of course he did. When Jacob and his sons came into the country, did they talk a strange speech? Not they. When Solomon married an Egyptian princess, did he understand her talk? Why, of course he did. Now, do you guess what's coming next?'

'No, not at all.'

'None of the scholars could. Listen, then. If they all understood each other, they must have all talked the same language, mustn't they?'

'Why, it would seem so.'

'It's a sound argument, which can't be denied. Nobody can deny it—I defy them. If they understood each other, there must have been a common language. Where did this common language spread? Over all the countries thereabout. What was the common language? Hebrew.'

'Oh!' said Angela. 'Then, they all talked Hebrew!'

'Every man Jack. Nothing else known. What next? They wanted to write it. Now, we find what seems to be one character in Egypt, and another in Syria, and another in Arabia, and another in Phœnicia, and another in Judæa. Bless you, I know all about their alphabets. What I say is—if a common language, then a common alphabet to write it with.'

'I see, a common alphabet. Which you discovered perhaps.'

'That, young lady, is my Discovery. That is the greatest Discovery of the age. I found it myself, once a small shoemaker in a little Victorian township; I alone found out that common alphabet, and have come over here to make it known. Not bad, says you, for a shoemaker who had to teach himself his own Hebrew.'

'And the scholars here——'

'They're jealous, that's what it is; they're jealous. Most of them have written books to prove other things, and they won't give in and own that they've been wrong. My word! The scholars——' He paused and shook his hands before her face. 'Some of them have got the Hebrew alphabet, and try to make out how one letter is a house and another a bull's head. And so on. And some have got the cuneiforms, and they make out that one bundle of arrows is an A and another a B. And so on. And some have got the hieroglyphic, and it's the same game with all. While I—if you please—with my little plain simple Discovery just show that all the different alphabets—different to outward seeming—are really one and the same.'

'This is very interesting,' said Angela. The little man was glowing with enthusiasm and pride; he was transformed: he walked up and down throwing about his arms; he stood before her, looking almost tall; his eyes flashed with fire, and his voice was strong. 'And can you read inscriptions by your simple alphabet?'

'There is not,' he replied, 'a single inscription in the British Museum that I can't read. I just sit down before it, with my Hebrew dictionary in my hand—I didn't tell you I learned Hebrew on purpose, did I?—and I read that inscription, however long it is. Ah!'

'This seems extraordinary. Can you show me your alphabet?'

He sat down, and began to make figures.

'What is the simplest figure? A circle? a square? a nought? No. A triangle. Very good, then. Do you think they were such fools as to copy a great ugly bull's head when they'd got a triangle ready to their hands and easy to draw? Not they; they just made a triangle—so—' he drew an equilateral triangle on its base—'and called it the first letter; and two triangles, one a-top of the other—so—and called that the second letter. Then they stuck their triangle in another position, and it was the third letter; and in another, and it is the fourth——' Angela felt as if her head was swimming as he manipulated his triangles, and rapidly produced his primitive alphabet, which really did present some resemblance to the modern symbols. 'There—and there—and there—and what is that? and this? And so you've got the whole. Now, young lady, with this in your hand, which is the key to all learning—and the Hebrew dictionary—there's nothing you can't manage.'

'And an account of this is to be given in your book, is it?'

'That is the secret of my book. Now you know what it was I found out; now you see why my friends paid my passage home, and are now looking for the glory which they prophesied.'

'Don't get gloomy again, Mr. Fagg. It is a long lane, you know, that has no turning. Let us hope for better luck.'

'No one will ever know,' he went on, 'the inscriptions that I have found—and read—in the Museum. They don't know what they've got. I've told nobody yet, but they are all in my book, and I'll tell you beforehand, Miss Kennedy, because you've been kind to me. Yes, a woman is best; I ought to have gone to the women first. I would marry you, Miss Kennedy, I would indeed; but—I am too old, and besides, I don't think I could afford a family.'

'I thank you, Mr. Fagg, all the same. You do me a great honour. But about these inscriptions?'

'Mind, it's a secret.' He lowered his voice to a whisper. 'There's cuneiform inscriptions in the Museum with David and Jonathan on them,—ah!—and Balaam and Balak—Aho!—' he positively chuckled over the thought of these great finds—'and the whole life of Jezebel—Jezebel! what do you think of that? And what else do you think they have got, only they don't know it? THE TWO TABLES OF STONE!! Nothing short of the Two Tables, with the Ten Commandments written out at length!!!'

Angela gazed with amazement at this admirable man; his faith in himself; his audacity; the grandeur of his conceptions; the wonderful power of his imagination overwhelmed her. But, to be sure, she had never before met a genuine enthusiast.

'I know where they are kept; nobody else knows. It is in a dark corner; they are each about two feet high; and there's a hole in the corner of each for Moses's thumb to hold them by. Think of that! I've read them all through, only'—he added with a look of bewilderment—'I think there must be something wrong with my Hebrew dictionary, because none of the commandments read quite right. One or two come out quite surprising. Yet the stones must be right, mustn't they? There can be no question about that; and the Discovery must be right. No question about that. And as for the dictionaries—who put them together? tell me that! Yah! the scholars!'

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE MISSING LINK.

THE Professor, then, started on his quest with a cheerful heart, caused by the certainty of dinner for some days to come. But he was an honest Professor, and he did not prolong his absence for the sake of those dinners. On the other hand, he made the most rapid despatch consistent with thorough work, and returned after an absence of four days, bearing with him the fruits of his research.

'I think,' said Harry, after reading his report—'I think, Miss Kennedy, that we have found a Missing Link.'

'Then they really will make their claim good?'

'I did not say that—quite. I said that we have found a Missing Link. There might be, if you will think of it—two. One of them would have connected the condescending wheelwright with his supposed parent, the last Lord Davenant. The other would connect him with quite another father.'

The truth, which was for some time carefully concealed from the illustrious pair, was, in fact, this.

There is a village of Davenant surrounding or adjoining a castle of Davenant, just as Alnwick, Arundel, Durham, Lancaster, Chepstow, Raglan, and a great many more English towns have a castle near them. And whether Davenant town was built to be protected by the castle, or the castle for the protection of the town, is a point on which I must refer you to the county historian, who knows all about it and is not likely to deceive you on so important a point. The castle is now a picturesque ruin, with a country house built beside it. In this country house the last Lord Davenant died and the last heir to the title was born. There is an excellent old church, with a tower and ivy, and high-pitched roof, as an ancient church should have, and in the family vault under the chancel all the Davenants, except the last heir, lie buried.

There is also in the village a small country inn called the Davenant Arms, where the Professor put up, and where he made himself extraordinarily popular, because, finding himself among an assemblage of folk slow to see and slower still to think, he astonished them for four nights consecutively. The rustics still tell, and will continue to tell so long as memory lasts, of the wonderful man who took their money out of their waistcoats, exchanged handkerchiefs, conveyed potatoes into strange coat-pockets, read their thoughts, picked out the cards they had chosen, made them take a card he had chosen whether they wanted it or not, caused balls of glass to vanish, changed halfpence into half-crowns, had a loaded pistol fired at himself and caught the ball, with other great marvels all for nothing, to oblige and astonish the villagers, and for the good of the house. These were the recreations of his evening hours. The mornings he spent in the vestry of the old church searching the registers.

There was nothing professional about it, only the drudgery of clerk's work; to do it at all was almost beneath his dignity; yet he went through with it conscientiously, and restrained himself from inviting the sexton, who stayed with him, to lend him his handkerchief or to choose a card. Nor did he even hide a card in the sexton's pocket, and then convey it into the parish register. Nothing of the sort. He was sternly practical and searched diligently. Nevertheless, he noted how excellent a place for the simpler feats would be the reading-desk. The fact is, that gentlemen of his profession never go to church, and therefore are ignorant of the uses of its various parts. On Sunday morning they lie in bed; on Sunday afternoon they have dinner, and perhaps the day's paper, and on Sunday evening they gather at a certain house of call for conjurers in Drury Lane and practise on each other. There is therefore no room in the conjurer's life for church. Some remedy should be found for this by the bishops.

'What have I got to look for?' said the Professor, as the sexton produced the old books. 'Well, I've got to find what families there were living here a hundred years ago, or thereabouts, named Davenant, and what Christian names they had, and whether there were two children born and baptised here in one year, both bearing the name of Davenant.'

The sexton shook his head. He was only a middle-aged man, and therefore not yet arrived at sextonial ripeness; for a sexton only begins to be mellow when he is ninety or thereabouts. He knew nothing of the Davenants except that there were once Lords Davenant, now lying in the family vault below the chancel, and none of them left in the parish at all, nor any in his memory, nor in that of his father's before him, so far as he could tell.

After a careful examination of the books, the Professor was enabled to state with confidence that at the time in question the Davenant name was borne by none but the family at the castle; that there were no cousins of the name in the place; and that the heir born in that year was christened on such a day, and received the name of Timothy Clitheroe.

If this had been the only evidence, the case would have made in favour of the Canaan City claimant; but, unfortunately, there was another discovery made by the Professor, at sight of which he whistled and then shook his head, and then considered whether it would not be best to cut out the page, while the sexton thought he was forcing a card, or palming a ball, or boiling an egg, or some other ingenious feat of legerdemain. For he instantly perceived that the fact recorded before his eyes had an all-important bearing upon the case of his illustrious friends.

The little story which he saw was, in short, this.

In the same year of the birth of the infant Timothy Clitheroe, there was born of a poor vagrom woman, who wandered no one knew where from into the parish, and died in giving him to the world, a man-child. There was no one to rejoice over him, or to welcome him, or to claim him, therefore he became parish property, and had to be christened, fed, flogged, admonished and educated, so far as education in those days was considered necessary, at the charge of the parish. The first step was to give him a name. For it was formerly, and may be still, a custom in country parishes to name a waif of this kind after the village itself, which accounts for many odd surnames, such as Stepney, Marybone, or Hoxton. It was not a good custom, because it might lead to complications, as perhaps it did in this case, when there was already another family legitimately entitled to bear the name.

The authorities, following this custom, conferred upon the baby the lordly name of Davenant. Then, as it was necessary that he should have a Christian name, and it would be a pity to waste good Richard or Robin upon a beggar-brat, they gave him the day of the week on which he was born. This was intended to keep him humble, and to remind him that he had no right to any of the distinguished Christian names bestowed upon respectably born children.

He was called Saturday Davenant.

The name, the date, and the circumstances were briefly recorded in the parish register.

In most cases this book contains three entries for each name, those of the three important events in his life; the beginning, the marrying, which is the making or the marring, and the ending. One does not, of course, count the minor occasions on which he may be mentioned, as on the birth or death of a child. The Professor turned over the pages of the register in vain for any further entry of this Saturday Davenant.

He appeared no more. His one public appearance, so far as history records it, was on that joyful occasion when, held in hireling arms, he was received into the Christian Church. The one thing to which he was born was his brotherhood in the Christian faith, no doubt the grandest of all possessions, yet in itself not professing to provide the material comforts of life. The baby was presented at the font, received a contemptuous name, squealed a little, no doubt, when he felt the cold water, and then—then—nothing more. What he did, whither he went, where he died, might be left to conjecture. A parish brat, a cottage home, bread and bacon to eat, with more bread than bacon, plenty of stick, the Church Catechism and particular attention called to the clauses about picking and stealing, practical work as a scarecrow at seven, the plough later on; for pleasures, quarter-staff, wrestling, fighting, bull-baiting, and perhaps poaching, with strong beer and small beer for drink; presently a wife, then children, then old age, then death. One was free to conjecture, because there was no more mention of this baby; he did not marry in the parish nor did he die in it. He therefore went away. In those days, if a man went away, it was for one of two reasons; either he fell into trouble and went away, to escape the wrath of the squire; or he enlisted, marched off with beer in his head and ribbons in his hat, swore terribly with the army in Flanders, and presently earned the immortal glory which England rejoices to confer upon the private soldier who falls upon the ensanguined field. The enjoyment of this glory is such a solid, substantial and satisfying thing, that fighting and war and the field of honour are, and always will be, greatly beloved and desired by private soldiers.

There was no other entry of this boy's name. When the Professor had quite satisfied himself upon this point he turned back to the first entry, and then became aware of a note in faded ink, now barely legible, written in the margin. It was as follows, and he copied it exactly:—

'Y^{e} above s^{d} Saturday D$_{\overline{nt}}$ was a Roag in Grane: he was bro't up in the Fear of God yet feared Him not; taught his Duty, yet did it not: admonished without stint of Rodd in Virtue, yet still inclined to Vice: he was app^{d} to the Wheelwright: was skillful, yet indolent: notorious as a Pocher who could not be caught: a Deceiver of Maidens: a Tosspot and a Striker. Compelled to leave the parish to avoid Prison and the Lash he went to London, *Latronum officina.* Was reported to have been sent to His Majesty's Plantations in Virginia, whereof nothing certain is known.'

This was the note which the Professor read and copied out, with misgivings that it would not prove acceptable. Of course, he knew the story, and quite understood what this might mean.

The next day, nothing more remaining to be found in the register, the Professor examined the brasses and tablets in the church, and paid a visit to the castle. And when he had faithfully executed his commission he went away, amid the regrets of the villagers, who had never before been entertained by so delightful and surprising a stranger, and brought back his spoils.

'What are we to think?' said Harry after reading this report. '"The Roag in Grane," this wheelwright by trade, who can he be but the grandfather of our poor old friend?'

'I fear it must be so,' said Angela. 'Saturday Davenant. Remember the little book.'

'Yes,' said Harry, 'the little book came into my mind at once.'

'Not a doubt,' added the Professor. 'Why, it stands to reason. The fellow found himself a long way from England, among strangers, with no money and only his trade. What was to prevent him from pretending to be one of the family whose name he bore?'

'And at the same time,' said Harry, 'with reserve. He never seems to have asserted that he was the son of Lord Davenant; he only threw out ambiguous words, he fired the imagination of his son, he christened him by the name of the lost heir, he pretended that it was his own Christian name, and it was not until they found out that this was the hereditary name that the claim was thought of. This Poacher and Striker seems to have possessed considerable native talent.'

'But what,' asked Angela, 'are we to do?'

'Let us do nothing, Miss Kennedy. We have our secret, and we may keep it for the present. Meantime, the case is hopeless on account of the absolute impossibility of connecting the wheelwright with the man supposed to have been drowned. Let them go on "enjoying" the title, ignorant of the existence of this unlucky Saturday Davenant.'

So, for the present, the thing was hidden away and nothing was said about it. And though about this time the Professor gave one or two entertainments in the drawing-room, we cannot suppose that his silence was bought, and it would be unjust to the noble profession of which he was a member to think that he would let out the secret had not Miss Kennedy paid him for their performance. Indeed, the Professor was an extremely honourable man, and would have scorned to betray confidence, and it was good of Miss Kennedy to find out that an evening of magic and miracle would do the girls good.

But a profound pity seized the heart of Angela. These poor people who believed themselves to be entitled to an English peerage, who were so mistaken, who would be so disappointed, who were so ignorant, who knew so little what it was they claimed—could not something be done to lessen their disappointment—to break their fall?

She pondered long over this difficulty. That they would in the end have to return to their own country was a thing about which there could be no doubt whatever; that they should return with no knowledge whatever of the reality of the thing they had claimed, what it meant, what it involved, its splendours and its obligations, seemed to her a very great pity. A little experience, she thought, even a glimpse of the life led by the best-bred and most highly cultivated and richest people of England, would be of so much advantage to them, that it would show them their own unfitness for the rank which they assumed and claimed. And presently she arrived at a project which she put into execution without delay. What this was you will presently see.

CHAPTER XXIV.

LORD JOCELYN'S TROUBLES.

As the season advanced, and the autumn deepened into winter, Angela found that there were certain social duties which it was impossible altogether to escape. The fiction of the country-house was good enough for the general world, but for her more intimate friends and cousins this would not do for long. Therefore, while she kept the facts of her present occupation and place of residence a secret from all except Constance Woodcote, now the unsympathising, she could not wholly shut herself off from the old circle. Among others there was one lady whose invitations she was in a sense bound to accept. What her obligations were, and who this lady was, belongs in no way to this history—that is to say, the explanation belongs to Angela's simple chronicle of the old days when she was only Miss Messenger, the heiress presumptive of the Great Brewery. Therefore it need not concern us. Suffice it to say that she was a lady in society, and that she gave great dinners and held other gatherings, and was at all times properly awake to the attractions which the young, and beautiful, and wealthy Angela Messenger lent to her receptions.

On this occasion Constance Woodcote, among others, was invited to meet her old friend; she came, but she was ungracious, and Angela felt, more than she had expected, how great already was the gulf between the old days of Newnham and her life of active, practical work. Six months before, such coldness would have hurt and pained her; now she hardly felt it. Yet Constance meant to demonstrate by a becoming frost of manner how grievous was her disappointment about those scholarships. Then there were half-a-dozen men—unmarried men, men in society, men of clubs, men who felt strongly that the possession of Miss Messenger's millions might reconcile them to matrimony, and were much interested by the possibility of an introduction to her, and came away disappointed because they got nothing out of her, not even an encouragement to talk; and everybody said that she was singularly cold, *distraite*, and even embarrassed that evening; and those who had heard that Miss Messenger was a young lady of great conversational powers, went away cynically supposing that any young lady with less than half her money could achieve the same reputation at the same cost of energy. The reason of this coldness, this preoccupation, was as follows.

The dinner party was large, and the conversation by no means general. So far as Angela was concerned, it was held entirely with the man who took her down, and his name was Lord Jocelyn le Breton—a rugged-faced man, with a pleasing manner and agreeable voice; no longer young. He talked to her a good deal in a light, irresponsible vein, as if it mattered very little what he said so that it amused the young lady. He discoursed about many things, principally about dinners, asking Angela what were her own views as to dinners, and expostulating with her feminine contempt for the subject. 'Each dinner,' he said, 'should be like a separate and distinct work of art, and should be contrived for different kinds of wine. There should be a champagne dinner, for instance, light and composed of many dishes, but some of these substantial; there should be a claret dinner, grave and conscientious; a Burgundy dinner of few courses, and those solid; a German wine dinner, in which only the simplest *plats* should appear. But unto harmony and consistency in dining we have not yet arrived. Perhaps, Miss Messenger, you may be induced to bring your intellect to bear upon the subject. I hear you took high honours at Newnham lately.'

She laughed.

'You do too much honour to my intellect, Lord Jocelyn. At Newnham they teach us political economy, but they have not trusted us with the art of dining. Do you know, we positively did not care much what we had for dinner!'

'My ward, Harry, used to say—but I forget if you ever met him.'

'I think not. What is his name?'

'Well, he used to bear my name, and everybody knew him as Harry le Breton; but he had no right to it, because he was no relation of mine, and so he gave it up and took his own.'

'Oh!' Angela felt profoundly uninterested in Mr. Henry le Breton.

'Yes. And now you never will meet him. For he is gone'—Lord Jocelyn uttered these words in so sepulchral a tone that Angela gave them greater significance than they deserved.

'I am very sorry,' she said.

'No, Miss Messenger, he is not dead. He is only dead to society. He has gone out of the world; he has returned to—in fact, his native rank of life.'

Angela reddened. What *could* he mean?

'You interest me, Lord Jocelyn. Do you say that your ward has voluntarily given up society, and—and—everything?' She thought of herself at the moment, and also, but vaguely, of Harry Goslett. For, although she knew that this young man had refused some kind of offer which included idleness, she had never connected him in her mind quite with her own rank and station. How could she? He was only a cabinet-maker, whose resemblance to a gentleman she had learned to accept without any further wonder.

'He gave up everything: he laughed over it: he took a header into the mob just as if he was going to enjoy the plunge. But did you not hear of it? Everybody talked about it—the story got into the Society journals—and people blamed me for telling him the truth.'

'I have not been in London much this year, therefore I heard nothing,' said Angela. Just then the dinner came to an end.

'Will you tell me more about your ward, Lord Jocelyn?' she asked, as she left him. His words had raised in her mind a vague and uncertain anxiety.

Half an hour later he came to her side. The room was by this time full, and Angela was surrounded. But she made room for Lord Jocelyn, and presently the others dropped away and they could talk. A young lady began, too, a long and very brilliant piece of music under cover of which everybody would talk.

'Do you really want to hear my trouble about Harry?' he asked. 'You look a very sympathetic young lady, and perhaps you will feel for me. You see, I brought him up in ignorance of his father, whom he always imagined to be a gentleman; whereas he was only a sergeant in a Line regiment. What is it, Miss Messenger?'

For she became suddenly white in the cheek. Could there be two Harrys, sons of sergeants, who had taken this downward plunge? More wonderful than a pair of Timothy Clitheroes.

'It is nothing, Lord Jocelyn. Pray go on. Your adopted son, then——'

'I had always resolved to tell him all about his people when he was twenty-three. Who would have thought, however, that he would take it as he did?'

'You forget that you have not told me what he did do. If I am to sympathise, you must tell me all.'

'As far as the world knows, he went away on leave, so to speak. Perhaps it is only on leave after all. But it is a long leave, and it looks more like desertion.'

'You are mysterious, Lord Jocelyn.'

'Are you curious, Miss Messenger?'

'Say, am I sympathetic? Tell me as much as you can about your ward.'

Lord Jocelyn looked in his listener's face. Yes; there was sympathy in it and interest, both, as phrenologists say, largely developed.

'Then I will explain to you, Miss Messenger, how the boy did this most remarkable and unexpected thing.' He paused a moment considering. 'Imagine a boy whom I had taken away from his own people at three, or thereabouts, so that he should never know anything of them at all, or dream about them, or yearn, you know, or anything of that kind—an orphan, too, with nothing but an Uncle Bunker—it is inconceivable!'

'But we do not get on,' said Angela, in great impatience; yet relieved to find from the reference to her worthy friend Bunker that there was only one Harry. 'What is inconceivable?'

'I am coming to that. I gave the boy the best education I could get for him; he was so eager and apt that he taught himself more than he could be taught; if he saw anybody doing a thing well, he was never satisfied till he could do it as well himself—not better, mark you! a cad might have wanted to do it better: a gentleman is content to do it as well as any—any other gentleman. There is hardly anything he could not do; there was nobody who did not love him; he was a favourite in society; he had hosts of friends; nobody cared who was his father: what did that matter? As I put it to him, I said, "Look at So-and-so and So-and-so: who are their fathers? Who cares? Who asks?" Yet when he learned the truth he broke away, gave up all, and went back to his own relations—to Whitechapel!'

Angela blushed again, and her lip trembled a little. Then she said softly:

'To Whitechapel! That is very interesting to me. Because, Lord Jocelyn, I belong to Whitechapel myself.'

'Do you?' She might as well have said that she belonged to Seven Dials. In fact, much better, because in his young days, his Corinthian days, Lord Jocelyn had often repaired to Seven Dials to see noble sportsmen *chez* Ben Caunt, and rat-killing and cock-fighting, and many other beautiful forms of sport. 'Do you really? Do you belong to that remarkable part of London?'

'Certainly. My grandfather—did you know him?'

Lord Jocelyn shook his head.

'He had the Brewery, you know, Messenger, Marsden and Company, in Whitechapel. He was born there, and always called himself a Whitechapel man. He seemed to be proud of it, so that in common filial respect I, too, should be proud of it. I am, in fact, a Whitechapel granddaughter.'

'But that does not seem to help my unlucky Harry.'

'It gives one a little more sympathy, perhaps,' she said. 'And that is, you know, so very useful a possession.'

'Yes,' but he did not seem to recognise its usefulness as regards his ward. 'Well, he went to Whitechapel with a light heart. He would look round him, make the acquaintance of his own people, then he would come back again and we would go on just as usual. At least he did not exactly say this, but I understood him so. Because it seemed impossible that a man who had once lived in society, among ourselves, and formed one of us, could ever dream of living down there.'

Angela laughed. From her superior knowledge of 'down there' she laughed.

'He went away, and I was left without him, for the first time for twenty years. It was pretty dull. He said he would give the thing a trial; he wrote to me that he was trying it, that it was not so bad as it seemed, and yet he talked as if the experiment would be a short one. I left him there. I went away for a cruise in the Mediterranean; when I came home he returned to me.'

'He did return, then?'

'Yes, he came back one evening a good deal changed. I should not have thought it possible for a boy to change so much in so short a time. He wasn't ill-fed; he hadn't suffered any privation, apparently; but he was changed: he was more thoughtful; his smile and his laugh were not so ready. Poor boy!'

Lord Jocelyn sighed heavily. Angela's sympathy grew deeper, for he evidently loved the 'boy.'

'What had he done, then?'

'He came to say farewell to me; he thanked me for—you know what a good honest lad would say; and he told me that he had had an offer made to him of an unexpected nature which he had determined to accept. You see, he is a clever fellow with his fingers, he can play and paint and carve and do all sorts of things. And among his various arts and accomplishments he knows how to turn a lathe, and so he has become a joiner or a cabinet-maker, and he told me that he has got an appointment in some great factory or works or something, as cabinet-maker in ordinary.'

'What is his name?'

'Harry Goslett.'

'Goslett! Goslett!' Here she blushed again, and once more made play with the fan. 'Has he got a relation, a certain Mr. Bunker?'

'Why—yes—I told you, an Uncle Bunker.'

'Then I remember the name. And, Lord Jocelyn, I hope you will be grateful to me, because I have been the humble means of procuring him this distinguished post. Mr. Bunker, in fact, was, or conceived that he had been, useful to my grandfather, and was said to be disappointed at getting nothing by the will. Therefore I endeavoured to make some return by taking his nephew into the House. That is all.'

'And a great deal more than enough, because, Miss Messenger, you have all out of your kindness done a great mischief, for if you had not employed him I am quite certain no one else would. Then he would have had to come back to me. Send him away. Do send him away, Miss Messenger. There are lots of cabinet-makers to be had. Then he will come back to society, and I will present him to you and he shall thank you.'

She smiled and shook her head.

'People are never sent away from the Brewery so long as they behave properly. But it is strange indeed that your ward should voluntarily surrender all the advantages of life and social position for the hard work and poor pay of an artisan. Was it . . . was it affection for his cousins?' She blushed deeply as she put this simple question.

'Strange indeed. When he came to me the other night, he told me a long story about men being all alike in every rank of life—I have noticed much the same thing in the army; of course he did not have the impudence to say that women are all alike; and he talked a quantity of prodigious nonsense about living among his own people. Presently, however, I got out of him the real truth.'

'What was that?'

'He confessed that he was in love.'

'With a young lady of Whitechapel? This does great credit to the excellent education you gave him, Lord Jocelyn.' She blushed for the fourth or fifth time, and he wondered why, and she held her fan before her face. 'But, perhaps,' she added, 'you are wrong, and women of all ranks, like men, are the same.'

'Perhaps, I ought not to have told you this—Miss Messenger. Now you will despise him. Yet he had the impudence to say that she was a lady—positively a lady—this Whitechapel dressmaker.'

'A dressmaker?—oh!' She threw into her voice a little of that icy coldness with which ladies are expected to receive this kind of announcement.

'Ah! now you care no more about him. I might have known that your sympathy would cease directly you heard all. He went into raptures over this young milliner. She is as beautiful as the day; she is graceful, accomplished, well-bred, well-mannered, a queen——'

'No doubt,' said Angela, still frozen. 'But really, Lord

Jocelyn, as it is Mr. Goslett, the cabinet-maker, and not you, who is in love with this paragon, we may be spared her praises.'

'And, which is more remarkable still, she won't have anything to say to him.'

'That is indeed remarkable. But perhaps, as she is the Queen of Dressmakers, she is looking for the King of Cabinet-Makers.'

'No doubt,' said Lord Jocelyn; 'I think the music is coming to an end. However—Miss Messenger, one favour.'

'A dozen, Lord Jocelyn, if I can grant them.'

'He refuses to take any help from me; he lives on work paid for at the rate of tenpence an hour. If you will not send him away—then—oh, then——'

'Quick, Lord Jocelyn, what is it?'

'Tax the resources of the Brewery. Put on the odd twopence. It is the gift of the Samaritan—make it a shilling an hour.'

'I will, Lord Jocelyn—hush! The music is just over, and I hope that the dressmaker will relent, and that there will be a wedding in Stepney Church, and that they will be happy ever after. Oh, brave and loyal lover! He gives up all, all—' she looked round the room filled with guests, and her great eyes became limpid, and her voice fell to a murmur—'for love, for love. Do you think, Lord Jocelyn, that the dressmaker will continue to be obdurate? But perhaps she does not know, or cannot suspect, what he has thrown away—for her sake—happy dressmaker!'

'I think,' said Lord Jocelyn afterwards, 'that if Harry had seen Miss Messenger before he saw his dressmaker we shouldn't have heard so much about the beautiful life of a working man. Why the devil couldn't I wait? This girl is a Helen of Troy, and Harry should have written his name Paris, and carried her off, by gad! before Menelaus or any other fellow got hold of her. What a woman! What a match it would have been!'

CHAPTER XXV.

AN INVITATION.

VERY shortly after the fatal discovery made by the Professor, Lord Davenant received the first outside recognition—so to speak—of his rank. It is true that no one within a mile of Stepney Green—that is, anywhere between Aldgate Pump and Bow Church—would have had the hardihood to express a doubt on the validity of a claim which conferred a lustre upon the neighbourhood; yet even Lord Davenant, not remarkable for quickness of perception, was sharp enough to know that recognition at Stepney is not altogether the same thing as recognition at Westminster. He was now once more tolerably comfortable in his mind. The agonies of composition were over, thanks to his young friend's assistance; the labour of transcription was finished; he felt, in looking at the bundle of papers, all the dignity of successful authorship; the Case, in fact, was now complete and ready for presentation to the Queen, or to any one, Lord Chancellor, Prime Minister, Lord Chamberlain, or American Minister, who would undertake and faithfully promise to lay it before Her Majesty. For his own part, brought up in the belief that the British Lion habitually puts his heroic tail between his legs when the name of America is mentioned, he thought that the Minister of the States was the proper person to present his Case. Further, the days of fatness were come again. Clara Martha, in some secret way known only to herself, was again in command of money: once more bacon and tea, and bread and butter, if not coffee, cream, and buckwheat cakes, with maple syrup and hot compone—delicacies of his native land—were spread upon the board at eight in the morning; and again the succulent steak of Stepney, yielding to none, not even to him of Fleet Street, appeared at stroke of one; and the noble lord could put up his feet and rest the long and peaceful morning through, unreproached by his consort. Therefore he felt no desire for any change, but would have been quite content to go on for ever enjoying his title among this simple folk, and careless about the splendours of his rank. How Clara Martha got the money he did not inquire. We, who know, may express our fears that here was another glaring violation of political economy, and that the weekly honorarium received every Saturday by Lady Davenant was by no means adequately accounted for by her weekly work. Still, her style was very fine, and there were no more delicate workers in the association than the little peeress with the narrow shoulders and the bright eyes.

Not one word, mark you, spoken of Saturday Davenant—that Roag in Grane—and the Professor as respectful as if his lordship had sat through thirty years of deliberation in the Upper House, and Mr. Goslett humbly deferential to her ladyship, and in secret confidential and familiar, even rollicking, with my lord, and Miss Kennedy respectfully thoughtful for their welfare.

This serenity was troubled and dissipated by the arrival of a letter addressed to Lady Davenant.

She received it—a simple letter on ordinary note-paper—with surprise, and opened it with some suspicion. Her experience of letters was not of late happy, inasmuch as her recent correspondence had been chiefly with American friends, who reminded her how they had all along told her that it was no good expecting that the Davenant claim would be listened to, and now she saw for herself, and had better come home again and live among the plain folk of Canaan, and praise the Lord for making her husband an American citizen—with much more to the same effect, and cruel words from nephew Nathaniel, who had no ambition, and would have sold his heirship to the coronet for a few dollars.

She looked first at the signature, and turned pale, for it was from that mysterious young lady, almost divine in the eyes of Stepney, because she was so rich, Miss Messenger.

'Lord!' cried Mrs. Bormalack. 'Do read it quick.'

Her ladyship read it through very slowly, much too slowly for her landlady's impatience.

Her pale cheeks flushed with pride and joy when she comprehended exactly what the letter meant; she drew herself up straight, and her shoulders became so sloping that the uneasy feeling about her clothes, already alluded to, once more passed through Mrs. Bormalack's sympathetic mind.

'It will be a change, indeed, for us,' she murmured, looking at her husband.

'Change?' cried the landlady.

'What change?' asked his lordship. 'Clara Martha, I do not want any change; I am comfortable here, I am treated with respect, the place is quiet, I do not want to change.'

He was a heavy man and lethargic—change meant some kind of physical activity—he disliked movement.

His wife tossed her head with impatience.

'Oh!' she cried, 'he would rather sit in his armchair than walk even across the Green to get his coronet. Shame upon him! O Carpenter! Shh!'

His lordship quailed and said no more. That allusion to his father's trade was not intended as a sneer; the slothfulness of his parent it was which the lady hurled at his lordship's head. No one could tell, no living writer is able to depict faithfully, the difficulties encountered and overcome by this resolute woman in urging her husband to action; how she had first to persuade him to declare that he was the heir to the extinct title; how she had next to drag him away from Canaan City; how she had to bear with his moanings, lamentations, and terrors, when he found himself actually on board the steamer, and saw the land slowly disappearing, while the great ship rolled beneath his unaccustomed feet, and consequences which he had not foreseen began to follow. These were things of the past, but it had been hard to get him away even from Wellclose Square, which he found comfortable, making allowance for the disrespectful Dane; and now—but it must and should be done.

'His lordship,' said the little woman, thinking she had perhaps said too much, 'is one of them who take root wherever you set them down. He takes after his grandfather, the Honourable Timothy Clitheroe. Set himself down in Canaan City, and took root at once, never wanted to go away. And the Davenants, I am told, never left the village from the day they built their castle there till the last lord died there. In other people, Mrs. Bormalack, it might be called sloth, but in his lordship's case we can only say that he is quick to take root. That is all, ma'am. And when we move him it is like tearing him up by the roots.'

'It is,' said his lordship, clinging to the arms of the chair; 'it is.

The letter was as follows, and Lady Davenant read it aloud:—

'Dear Lady Davenant,—I have quite recently learned that you and Lord Davenant are staying at a house on Stepney Green which happens to be my property. Otherwise, perhaps, I might have remained in ignorance of this most interesting circumstance. I have also learned that you have crossed the Atlantic for the purpose of presenting a claim to the Davenant title, which was long supposed to be extinct, and I hasten to convey to you my most sincere wishes for your success.

'I am at this moment precluded from doing myself the pleasure of calling upon you, for reasons with which I will not trouble you. I hope, however, to be allowed to do so before very long. Meantime, I take the liberty of offering you the hospitality of my own house in Portman Square, if you will honour me by accepting it, as your place of residence during your stay in London. You will perhaps find Portman Square a central place, and more convenient for you than Stepney Green, which, though it possesses undoubted advantages in healthful air and freedom from London fog, is yet not altogether a desirable place of residence for a lady of your rank.

'I am aware that in addressing you without the ceremony of an introduction I am taking what may seem to you a liberty. I may be pardoned on the ground that I feel so deep an interest in your romantic story, and so much sympathy with your courage in crossing the ocean to prosecute your claim. Such claims as these are, as you know, jealously regarded and sifted with the greatest care, so that there may be difficulty in establishing a perfectly made-out case, and one which shall satisfy the House of Lords as impregnable to any attack. There is, however, such a thing as a moral certainty, and I am well assured that Lord Davenant would not have left his native country had he not been convinced in his own mind that his cause is a just one, and that his claim is a duty owed to his illustrious ancestors. So that, whether he wins or loses, whether he succeeds or fails, he must in either case command our respect and our sympathy. Under these circumstances I trust that I may be forgiven, and that your ladyship will honour my poor house with your presence. I will send, always provided that you accept, my carriage for you on any day that you may appoint. Your reply may be directed here, because all letters are forwarded to me, though I am not, at the present moment, residing at my town house.

'Believe me to remain, dear Lady Davenant, yours very faithfully, 'ANGELA MARSDEN MESSENGER.'

'It is a beautiful letter!' cried Mrs. Bormalack, 'and to think of Miss Messenger knowing that this house is one of hers! Why, she's got hundreds. Now, I wonder who could have told her that you were here.'

'No doubt,' said her ladyship, 'she saw it in the papers.'

'What a Providence that you came here! If you had stayed at Wellclose Square, which is a low place and only fit for foreigners, she never would have heard about you. Well, it will be a sad blow losing your ladyship, but of course you must go. You can't refuse such a noble offer; and though I've done my best, I'm sure, to make his lordship comfortable, yet I know that the dinner hasn't always been such as I could wish, though as good as the money would run to. And we can't hope to rival Miss Messenger, of course, in housekeeping, though I *should* like to hear what she gives for dinner.'

'You shall, Mrs. Bormalack,' said her ladyship; 'I will send you word myself, and I am sure we are very grateful to you for all your kindness, and especially at times when—when my husband's nephew Nathaniel, who is not the whole-souled and high-toned man that the heir to a peerage ought to be——'

'Don't speak of it,' interrupted the good landlady, 'don't speak of it, your ladyship. It will always be my pride to remember that your ladyship thought I did my little best. But, there, with mutton at elevenpence ha'penny!'

The name of Portman Square suggested nothing at all to the illustrious pair. It might just as well have been Wellclose Square. But here was an outside recognition of them; and from a very rich young lady, who perhaps was herself acquainted with some of the members of the Upper House.

'It is a proper letter,' said Lady Davenant, critically, 'a letter written in a becoming spirit. There's many things to admire in England, but the best thing is the respect to rank. Now, in our own City did they respect his lordship for his family? Not a mite. The boys drew pictures of him on the walls with a crown on his head and a sword in his hand.'

'Must we go, Clara Martha?' his lordship asked in a tremulous voice.

'Yes, we must go; we must show people that we are ready to assume the dignity of the position. As for my husband, Mrs. Bormalack'— she looked at him sideways while she addressed the landlady—'there are times when I feel that nothing but noble blood confers real dignity'—his lordship coughed—'real dignity and a determination to have your rights, and a behaviour according.'

Lord Davenant straightened his back and held up his head. But when his wife left him he drooped it again and looked sad.

Lady Davenant took the letter with her, to show Miss Kennedy.

'I shall never forget old friends, my dear,' she said kindly, when Angela had read it through, 'never; and your kindness in my distress I could not forget if I tried.' The tears stood in her eyes as she spoke. 'We are standing now on the very threshold of Greatness; this is the first step to Recognition; a short time more and my husband will be in his right place among the British peers. As for myself, I don't seem to mind any, Miss Kennedy.

It's for him that I mind. Once in his own place, he will show the world what he is capable of. You only think of him as a sleepy old man, who likes to put up his feet and shut his eyes. So he is—so he is. But wait till he gets his own. Then you will see. As for eloquence, now, I remember one Fourth of July—but of course we were Amer'cans then.'

'Indeed, Lady Davenant, we shall all be rejoiced if you succeed. But do not forget Miss Messenger's warning. There is a moral success, and there is a legal success. You may have to be contented with the former. But that should be enough for you, and you would then return to your own people with triumph.'

'Aurelia Tucker,' said her ladyship, smiling gently, 'will wish she hadn't taken up the prophesyin' line. I shall forgive her, though envy is indeed a hateful passion. However, we cannot all have illustrious ancestors, though since our own elevation, there's not a man, woman, or child in Canaan City, except the Dutchmen, who hasn't connected himself with an English family, and the demand for Red-books and books of the County Families is more than you could believe, and they do say that many a British peer will have to tremble for his title.'

'Come,' said Angela, interrupting these interesting facts, 'come, Lady Davenant, I knew beforehand of this letter, and Miss Messenger has given me work in anticipation of your visit.'

She led the little lady to the show room, and here, laid out on the chairs, were marvels. For there were dresses in silk and in velvet: dresses of the best silk, moiré antique, brocaded silk, silk that would stand upright of itself, without the aid of a chair back, and velvet of the richest, the blackest, and the most costly. There could be no doubt whatever as to the person for whom these dresses had been designed, because nobody else had such narrow and such sloping shoulders. Never in her dreams had her ladyship thought it possible that she should wear such dresses.

'They are a present from Miss Messenger,' said Miss Kennedy. 'Now, if you please, we will go into the trying-on room.'

Then Lady Davenant discovered that these dresses were trimmed with lace, also of the most beautiful and delicate kind. She had sometimes seen lace during her professional career, but she never possessed any, and the sight of it created a kind of yearning in her heart to have it on, actually on her sleeves and round her neck.

When she was dressed in her velvet with the lace trimming she looked a very stately little lady. When Angela had hung about her neck a heavy gold chain with a watch and seals; when she had deftly added a touch to her still luxuriant hair, and set in it a small aigrette of brilliants; when she had put on her a pair of gloves and given her a large and beautifully painted fan, there was no nobler-looking lady in the land, for all she was so little.

Then Angela curtsied low and begged her ladyship to examine the dress in the glass. Her ladyship surveyed herself with an astonishment and delight impossible to be repressed, although they detracted somewhat from the dignity due to the dress.

'Oh, Aurelia!' she exclaimed, as if, in the joy of her heart, she could have wished her friend to share her happiness.

Then Miss Kennedy explained to her that the velvet and the magnificent silk dresses were for the evening only, while for the morning there were other black silk dresses, with beautiful fur cloaks and things for carriage exercise, and all kinds of things provided, so that she might make a becoming appearance in Portman Square.

'As for his lordship,' Miss Kennedy went on, 'steps have been taken to provide him also with garments due to his position. And I think, Lady Davenant, if I may venture to advise——'

'My dear,' said her ladyship, simply, 'just tell me, right away, what I am to do.'

'Then you are to write to Miss Messenger and tell her that you will be ready to-morrow morning, and say any kind thing that occurs to your kind heart. And then you will have undisturbed possession of the big house in Portman Square, with all its servants, butler, coachman, footman, and the rest of them, at your orders. And I beg—that is, I hope—that you will make use of them. Remember that a nobleman's servant expects to be ordered, not asked. Drive every day; go to the theatres to amuse yourselves—I am sure after all this time you want amusement.'

'We had lectures at Canaan City,' said her ladyship; 'shall we go to lectures?'

'N—no. I think there are none. But you should go to concerts if you like them, and to picture galleries. Be seen about a good deal; make people talk about you, and do not press your Case before you have been talked about.'

'Do you think I can persuade Timothy—I mean, his lordship—to go about with me?'

'You will have the carriage, you know; and if he likes he can sleep at the theatre; you have only to take a private box—but be seen and be talked about.'

This seemed very good advice. Lady Davenant laid it to heart. Then she took off her magnificent velvet and put on the humble stuff again, with a sigh. Happily, it was the last day she would wear it.

On returning to the boarding-house she found her husband in great agitation, for he, too, had been 'trying on,' and he had been told peremptorily that the whole of the existing wardrobe must be abolished, and changed for a new one which had been provided for him. The good old coat, whose sleeves were so shiny, whose skirts so curly, whose cuffs so worn, must be abandoned; the other things which long custom had adapted to every projection of his figure must go too; and, in place of them, the new things which he had just been trying on.

'There's a swallow-tail, Clara Martha, for evening wear. I shall have to change my clothes, they tell me, every evening; and frock-coats to button down the front like a congress man in a statue; and—oh! Clara Martha, we are going to have a terrible time!'

'Courage, my lord,' she said. 'The end will reward us. Only hold up your head and remember that you are enjoying the title!'

The evening was rather sad, though the grief of the noble pair at leaving their friends was shared by none but their landlady, who really was attached to the little birdlike woman, so resolute and so full of courage. As for the rest, they behaved as members of a happy family are expected to behave—that is to say, they paid no heed whatever to the approaching departure of two out of their number, and Josephus leaned his head against the wall, and Daniel Fagg plunged his hands into his hair, and old Mr. Maliphant sat in the corner with his pipe in his mouth and narrated bits of stories to himself, and laughed.

CHAPTER XXVI.

LORD DAVENANT'S GREATNESS.

PROBABLY no greater event had ever happened within the memory of Stepney Green than the arrival of Miss Messenger's carriage to take away the illustrious pair from the boarding-house. Mrs. Bormalack felt, with a pang, when she saw the pair of greys, with the coachman and footman on the box, actually standing before her own door, for all to see, as if she had not thoroughly appreciated the honour of having a peer and his consort residing under her roof, and paying every week for board and lodging the moderate sum of —— but she could not bear to put it into words. Now, however, they were going.

His lordship, in his new frock-coat tightly buttoned, stood, looking constrained and stiff, with one hand on the table and the other thrust into his breast, like a certain well-known statue of Washington. His wife had instructed him to assume this attitude. With him were Daniel Fagg, the Professor, and Harry, the rest of the boarders being engaged in their several occupations. Mrs. Bormalack was putting the final touches to Lady Davenant's morning toilette.

'If I was a lord,' said Daniel, 'I should become a great patron to discovererers. I would publish their works for them.'

'I will, Mr. Fagg, I will,' said his lordship; 'give me time to look around and to see how the dollars come in. Because, gentlemen, as Clara Martha—I mean her ladyship—is not ready yet, there is time for me to explain that I don't quite know what is to happen next, nor where those dollars are to come from unless it is from the Davenant estates. But I don't think, Mr. Fagg, that we shall forget old friends. A man born to a peerage—that is an accident, or the gift of Providence; but to be a Hebrew scholar comes from genius. When a man has been a school-teacher for near upon forty years, he knows what genius means—and it's skurse, even in Amer'ca.'

'Then, my lord,' said Daniel, producing his note-book, 'I may put your lordship's name down for —— How many copies?'

'Wal, Mr. Fagg, I don't care how many copies you put my name down for, provided you don't ask for payment until the way is clear. I don't suppose they will play it so low on a man as to give him his peerage without a mite of income, even if it has to be raised by a tax on somethin'.'

'American beef will have to be taxed,' said Harry. 'Never fear, my lord, we will pull you through, somehow. As Miss Messenger said, "moral certainty" is a fine card to play, even if the committee of the House of Lords don't recognise the connection.'

The Professor looked guilty, thinking of that 'Roag in Grane,' Saturday Davenant, wheelwright, who went to the American colonies.

Then her ladyship appeared, complete and ready, dressed in her black silk, with a fur cloak and a magnificent muff of sable, stately, gracious, and happy. After her, Mrs. Bormalack, awed. 'I am ready, my lord,' she said, standing in the doorway. 'My friends, we shall not forget those who were hospitable to us and kind in the days of our adversity. Mr. Fagg, you may depend upon us; you have his lordship's permission to dedicate your book to his lordship; we shall sometimes speak of your discovery. The world of fashionable London shall hear of your circles.'

'Triangles, my lady,' said Daniel, bowing.

'I beg your pardon, Mr. Fagg, I ought to have known; and the triangle goes with the fife and the drum in all the militia regiments. Professor, if there is any place in Portman Square where an entertainment can be held, we will remember you. Mr. Goslett—ah! Mr. Goslett—we shall miss *you*, very much. Often and often has my husband said that but for your timely aid he must have broken down. What can we now do for you, Mr. Goslett?'

Nothing could have been more generous than this dispensing of patronage.

'Nothing,' said Harry; 'but I thank you all the same.'

'Perhaps Miss Messenger wants a cabinet made.'

'No, no,' he cried hastily. 'I don't want to make cabinets for Miss Messenger. I mend the office stools for the Brewery, and I work for . . . . for Miss Kennedy,' he added with a blush.

Lady Davenant nodded her head and laughed. So happy was she, that she could even show for the first time an interest in something outside the Case.

'A handsome couple,' she said simply. 'Yes, my dear, go on working for Miss Kennedy, because she is worth it. And now, my lord! Gentlemen, I wish you farewell.'

She made the most stately, the most dignified obeisance, and turned to leave them. But Harry sprang to the front and offered his arm.

'Permit me, Lady Davenant.'

It was extraordinary enough for the coachman to be ordered to Stepney Green to take up a lord; it was more extraordinary to see that lord's noble lady falling on the neck of an ordinary female in a black stuff gown and an apron, namely, Mrs. Bormalack, and still more wonderful to see that noble lady led to the carriage by a young gentleman who seemed to belong to the place.

'I know him,' said James the footman, presently.

'Who is he?'

'He's Mr. Le Breton, nephew or something of Lord Jocelyn. I've seen him about, and what he's doing on Stepney Green the Lord only knows.'

'James!' said the coachman.

'John!' said the footman.

'When you don't understand what a young gentleman is a-doin', what does a man of your experience conclude?'

'John,' said the footman, 'you are right as usual. But I didn't see her.'

There was a little crowd outside, and it was a proud moment for Lady Davenant when she walked through the lane—which she could have wished a mile long—formed by the spectators, and took her place in the open carriage beneath the great fur rug. His lordship followed with a look of sadness or apprehension rather than triumph. The door was slammed, the footman mounted the box, and the carriage drove off. One boy called 'Hooray!' and jumped on the curbstone; to him Lord Davenant took off his hat; another turned catherine-wheels along the road, and Lord Davenant took off his hat to him, too, with aristocratic impartiality, till the coachman flicked at him with his whip, and then he ran behind the carriage and used language for a quarter of a mile.

'Timothy,' said her ladyship, 'would that Aurelia Tucker were here to see!'

He only groaned. How could he tell what sufferings in the shape of physical activity might be before him? When would he be able to put up his feet again? One little disappointment marred the complete joy of the departure. It was strange that Miss Kennedy, who had taken so much interest in the business, who had herself tried on the dresses, should not have been there to see. It was not kind of her—who was usually so very kind—to be absent on this important occasion.

They arrived at Portman Square a little before one.

Miss Messenger sent them her compliments by her own maid, and hoped they would be perfectly comfortable in her house, which was placed entirely at their disposal. She was only sorry that absence from town would prevent her from personally receiving Lady Davenant.

The spaciousness of the rooms, the splendour of the furniture, the presence of many servants, awed the simple little American woman. She followed her guide, who offered to show them the house, and led them into all the rooms—the great and splendidly furnished drawing-room, the dining-room, the morning-room, and the library—without saying a word. Her husband walked after her in the deepest dejection, hanging his head and dangling his hands in forgetfulness of the statuesque attitude. He saw no chance whatever for a place of quiet meditation.

Presently they came back to the morning-room. It was a pleasant, sunny room, not so large as the great dining-room, nor so gaunt in its furniture, nor was it hung with immense pictures of game and fruit, but with light and bright water-colours.

'I should like,' said her ladyship, hesitating, because she was a little afraid that her dignity demanded that they should use the biggest room of all—'I should like, if we could, to sit in this room when we are alone.'

'Certainly, my lady.'

'We are simple people,' she went on, trying to make it clear why they liked simplicity, 'and accustomed to a plain way of life, so that his lordship does not look for the splendour that belongs to his position.'

'No, my lady.'

'Therefore, if we may use this room mostly—and—and keep the drawing-room for when we have company—' She looked timidly at the grave young woman who was to be her maid.

'Certainly, my lady.'

'As for his lordship,' she went on, 'I beg that he may be undisturbed in the morning when he sits in the library. He is much occupied in the morning.'

'Yes, my lady.'

'I think I noticed,' said Lord Davenant, a little more cheerfully, 'as we walked through the library, a most beautiful chair.' He cleared his throat but said no more.

Then they were shown their own rooms, and told that luncheon would be served immediately.

'And I hope, Clara Martha,' said his lordship when they were alone, 'that luncheon in this house means something solid and substantial. Fried oysters, now, with a beefsteak and tomatoes, and a little green corn in the ear, I should like.'

'It will be something, my dear, worthy of our rank. I almost regret, now, that you are a teetotaller. Wine, somehow, seems to belong to a title. Do you think that you could break your vow and take one glass, or even two, of wine, just to show that you are equal to the position?'

'No, Clara Martha,' her husband replied with decision. 'No. I will not break the pledge, not even for a glass of old Bourbon.'

There were no fried oysters at that day's luncheon, nor any green corn in the ear, but it was the best square meal that his lordship had ever sat down to in his life. Yet it was marred by the presence of an imposing footman, who seemed to be watching to see how much an American could eat. This caused his lordship to drop knives and upset glasses, and went very near to mar the enjoyment of the meal.

After the luncheon he bethought him of the chair in the library and retired there. It was, indeed, a most beautiful chair, low in the seat, broad and deep, not too soft, and there was a footstool. His lordship sat down in this chair beside a large and cheerful fire, put up his feet and surveyed the room. Books were ranged round all the walls, books from floor to ceiling; there was a large table with many drawers covered with papers, magazines, and reviews, and provided with ink and pens. The door was shut, and there was no sound save of a passing carriage in the square.

'This,' said his lordship, 'seems better than Stepney Green. I wish nephew Nathaniel were here to see.'

With these words upon his lips he fell into a deep slumber.

At half-past three his wife came to wake him up. She had ordered the carriage, and was ready and eager for another drive along those wonderful streets which she had seen for the first time. She roused him with great difficulty, and persuaded him, not without words of refusal, to come with her. Of course she was perfectly wide awake.

'This,' she cried, once more in the carriage, 'this is London, indeed. Oh! to think that we have wasted months at Stepney, thinking that was town. Timothy, we must wake up; we have a great deal to see and to learn. Look at the shops, look at the carriages. Do tell! It's *better* than Boston City. Now we have got the carriage, we will go out every day and see something; I've told them to drive past the Queen's Palace, and to show us where the Prince of Wales lives. Before long we shall go there ourselves, of course, with the rest of the nobility. There's only one thing that troubles me.'

'What is that, Clara Martha? You air thinkin', perhaps, that it isn't in nature for them to keep the dinners every day up to the same pitch of elevation?'

She repressed her indignation at this unworthy suggestion.

'No, Timothy; and I hope your lordship will remember that in our position we can afford to despise mere considerations of meat and drink, and wherewithal we shall be clothed.' She spoke as if pure Christianity was impossible beneath their rank, and, indeed, she had never felt so truly virtuous before. 'No, Timothy, my trouble is that we want to see everything there is to be seen.'

'That is so, Clara Martha. Let us sit in this luxurious chaise, and see it all. I never get tired o' settin', and I like to see things.'

'But we can only see the things that cost nothing, or the outside of things, because we've got no money.'

'No money at all?'

'None: only seven shillings, and threepence in coppers.'

This was the dreadful truth. Mrs. Bormalack had been paid, and the seven shillings was all that remained.

'And, oh! there is so much to see! We'd always intended to run round some day, only we were too busy with the Case to find the time, and see all the shows we'd heard tell of—the Tower of London and Westminster Abbey, and the Monument and Mr. Spurgeon's Tabernacle—but we never thought things were so grand as this. When we get home we will ask for a guide-book of London, and pick out all the things that are open free.

That day they drove up and down the streets, gazing at the crowds and the shops. When they got home, tea was brought them in the morning-room, and his lordship, who took it for another square meal, requested the loaf to be brought, and did great things with the bread and butter—and having no footman to fear.

At half-past seven a bell rang, and presently Miss Messenger's maid came and whispered that it was the first bell, and would her ladyship go to her own room, and could she be of any help?

Lady Davenant rose at once, looking, however, much surprised. She went to her own room, followed by her husband, too much astonished to ask what the thing meant.

There was a beautiful fire in the room, which was very large and luxuriously furnished, and lit with gas burning in soft-coloured glass.

'Nothing could be more delightful,' said her ladyship, 'and this room is a picture. But I don't understand it.'

'Perhaps it's the custom,' said her husband, 'for the aristocracy to meditate in their bedrooms.'

'I don't understand it,' she repeated. 'The girl said the *first* bell. What's the second? They can't *mean* us to go to bed.'

'They must,' said his lordship. 'Yes, we must go to bed. And there will be no supper to-night. To-morrow, Clara Martha, you must speak about it, and say we're accustomed to later hours. At nine o'clock or ten we can go with a cheerful heart—after supper. But—well—it looks a soft bed, and I dare say I can sleep in it. You've nothing to say, Clara Martha, before I shut my eyes? Because if you have, get it off your mind, so's not to disturb me afterwards.'

He proceeded to undress in his most leisurely manner, and in ten minutes or so was getting into bed. Just as his head fell upon the pillows there was a knock at the door.

It was the maid who came to say that she had forgotten to tell her ladyship that dinner was at eight.

'What?' cried the poor lady, startled out of her dignity. 'Do you mean to say that we've got to have dinner?'

'Certainly, my lady;' this young person was extremely well-behaved, and in presence of her masters and mistresses and superiors knew not the nature of a smile.

'My!'

Her ladyship standing at the door looked first at the maid without and then at her husband, whose eyes were closed and who was experiencing the first and balmy influences of sweet sleep. She felt so helpless that she threw away her dignity and cast herself upon the lady's-maid. 'See now!' she said, 'what is your name, my dear?'

'Campion, my lady.'

'I suppose you've got a Christian name?'

'I mean that Miss Messenger always calls me Campion.'

'Well, then, I suppose I must too. We are simple people, Miss Campion, and not long from America, where they do things different, and have dinner at half-past twelve and supper at six. And my husband has gone to bed. What is to be done?'

That a gentleman should suppose bed possible at eight o'clock in the evening was a thing so utterly inconceivable that Campion could for the moment suggest nothing. She only stared. Presently she ventured to suggest that his lordship might get up again.

'Get up, Timothy, get up this minute!' Her ladyship shook and pushed him till he opened his eyes, and lifted his head. 'Don't stop to ask questions, but get up, right away.' Then she ran back to the door. 'Miss Campion!'

'Yes, my lady.'

'I don't mind much about myself, but it might not look well for his lordship not to seem to know things just exactly how they're done in England. So please don't tell the servants, Miss Campion.'

She laid her hand on the maid's arm and looked so earnest, that the girl felt sorry for her.

'No, my lady,' she replied. And she kept her word, so that though the servants' hall knew how the noble lord and his lady had been brought from Stepney Green, and how his lordship floundered among the plates at lunch, and ate up half a loaf with afternoon tea, they did not know that he went to bed instead of dressing for dinner.

'And, Miss Campion,' she was now outside the door, holding it ajar, and the movements of a heavy body hastily putting on clothes could be distinctly heard, 'you will please tell me, presently, what time they do have things.'

'Yes, my lady.'

'Family prayers, now? His lordship will lead, of course, a thing he is quite used to, and can do better than most, having always—' here she stopped, remembering that there was no absolute necessity to explain the duties of a village schoolmaster.

'There are no family prayers, my lady, and your ladyship can have dinner or any other meal at any time you please.'

'His lordship's times for meals will be those of his brother peers.'

'Yes, my lady. Breakfast at ten?'

'Ten will do perfectly.' It was two hours later than their usual time, and her husband's sufferings would be very great. Still, everything must give way to the responsibilities of the rank.

'Will your ladyship take luncheon at half-past one, and tea at half-past five, and dinner at eight?'

'Yes, now that we know them, these hours will suit me perfectly. We do not in our own country take tea before dinner, but after it. That is nothing, however. And supper?'

'Your ladyship can have supper whenever you want it,' replied the maid. She hesitated for a moment and then went on. 'It is not usual for supper to be served at all.'

'Oh! then we must go without.'

By this time her husband was dressed, and, obedient to instruction, he had put on his new dress coat, without, however, making any alteration in the rest of his morning garments. The effect, therefore, when they descended to the drawing-room would have been very startling, but for the fact that there was nobody to see it.

If luncheon was a great meal, dinner was far more magnificent and stately; only there were two footmen instead of one, and his lordship felt that he could not do that justice to the dinner which the dinner deserved, because those two great hulking fellows in livery watched him all the time. After dinner they sat in the great drawing-room, feeling very magnificent and yet uncomfortable.

'The second dinner,' said his lordship in a half-whisper, 'made me feel, Clara Martha, that we did right to leave Canaan City. I never before knew what they really meant by enjoying a title, and I don't think I ever thoroughly enjoyed it before. The red mullet was beautiful, and the little larks in paper baskets made me feel a Lord all over.'

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE SAME SIGNS.

'THIS he has done—for love.'

When Angela returned to her dressmakery, it was with these words ringing in her ears, like some refrain which continually returns and will not be silenced.

'This he has done—for love.'

It was a great deal to do—a great deal to give up; she fully realised, after her talk with Lord Jocelyn, how much it was that he had given up—at her request. What had she herself done, she asked, in comparison? She had given money—anybody could give money. She had lived in disguise, under false pretences, for a few months; but she never intended to go on living in the East End, after she had set her Association on a firm basis. To be sure, she had been drawn on into wider schemes, and could not retire until these, including the Palace of Delight, were well started. But this young man had given up all, cheerfully, for her sake. Because she was a dressmaker, and lived at Stepney, he would be a workman and live there as well. For her sake he had given up for ever the life of ease and culture, which might have been his, among the gentle-folk to whom he belonged; for her sake he left the man who stood to him *in loco parentis*; for her sake he gave up all the things that are dear to young men, and became a servant. And without a murmur. She watched him going to his work in the morning, cheerful, with the sunshine ever in his face, in fact, sunshine lived there—his head erect, his eyes fearless, not repenting at all of his choice, perhaps hopeful that in the long run those impediments spoken of might be removed; in that hope he lived. Should that hope be disappointed—what then? Only to have loved, to have sacrificed so much for the sake of love, Angela said to herself, thinking of something she had read, was enough. Then she laughed because this was so silly, and the young man deserved to have some reward.

Then, as a first result of this newly-acquired knowledge, the point of view seemed changed. Quite naturally, after the first surprise at finding so much cultivation in a working-man, she regarded him, like all the rest, from her own elevated platform. In the same way he, from his own elevation, had been, in a sense, looking down upon herself, though she did not suspect the fact. One might pause here, in order to discuss how many kinds of people do consider themselves on a higher level than their neighbours. My own opinion is, that every man thinks himself on so very high a platform as to entitle him to consider the greater part of mankind quite below him; the fact that no one else thinks so has nothing to do with it. Any one, however, can understand how Angela would at first regard Harry, and Harry the fair dressmaker; further, that, whatever acquaintance or intimacy grew up between them, the first impression would always remain, with the mental attitude of a slight superiority in both minds, so long as the first impression, the first belief as to the real facts, was not removed. Now that it was removed on one side, Angela, for her part, could no longer look down; there was no superiority left, except in so far as the daughter of a Whitechapel brewer might consider herself of finer clay than the son of a sergeant in the Army, also of Whitechapel origin.

All for love of her!

The words filled her heart; they made her cheeks burn and her eyes glow. It seemed so great and noble a thing to do; so grand a sacrifice to make.

She remembered her words of contempt when, in a shamefaced, hesitating way, as if it was something wrong, he had confessed that he might go back to a life of idleness. Why, she might have known—she ought to have known—that it was not to an ignoble life among ignoble people that he would go. Yet she was so stupid.

What a sacrifice to make! And all for love of her!

Then the flower of love sprang up and immediately blossomed, and was a beauteous rose, ready for her lover to gather and place upon his heart. But as yet she hardly knew it.

Yet she had known all along that Harry loved her. He never tried to conceal his passion. 'Why,' she said to herself, trying to understand the meaning of the sudden change in herself,—'Why, it only seemed to amuse me; the thing was absurd; and I felt pity for him, and a little anger because he was so presumptuous; and I was a little embarrassed for fear I had compromised myself with him. But it wasn't absurd at all; and he loves me, though I have no fortune. Oh, Heaven! I am a she Dives, and he doesn't know it, and he loves me all the same.'

She was to tell him when the 'impediments' were removed. Why, they were removed already. But should she tell him? How could she dare to tell him? No girl likes to do her own wooing; she must be courted; she must be won. Besides—perhaps—but here she smiled—he was not so very much in love, after all. Perhaps he would change; perhaps he would grow tired and go home and desert her; perhaps he would fall in love with someone else. And perhaps Angela, the strong-minded student of Newnham, who would have no love or marriage, or anything of the kind in her life, was no stronger than any of her sisters at the approach of Love the Unconquered.

She came back the evening after that dinner. Her cheek had a new colour upon it; there was a new smile upon her lips; there was a new softness in her eyes.

'You look so beautiful this evening,' said Nelly. 'Have you been happy while you were away?'

'I have heard something that has made me happier,' said Angela. 'But you, dear Nelly, have not. Why are your cheeks so pale, and what is the meaning of the dark lines under your eyes?'

'It is nothing,' the girl replied quickly. 'I am quite well. I am always well.' But she was not. She was nervous and preoccupied. There was something on her mind.

Then Harry came, and they began to pass the evening in the usual way, practising their songs, with music, and the little dance, without which the girls could not have gone away happy. And Angela, for the first time, observed a thing which struck a chill to her heart and robbed her of half her joy.

Why had she never before discovered this thing? Ah! ignorant maiden, despite the wisdom of the schools! Hypatia herself was not more ignorant than Angela, who knew not that the chief quality of the rose of love in her heart was to make her read the hearts of others. Armed with this magic power, she saw what she might have seen long before.

In the hasty glance, the quick flush, the nervous trembling of her hands, poor Nelly betrayed her secret. And by those signs the other girl, *who loved the same man*, read that secret.

'Oh! selfish woman!' said Angela's heart. 'Is your happiness to be bought at such a cost?'

A girl of lower nature might have been jealous. Angela was not. It seemed to her no sin in Nelly that she thought too much of such a man. But she pitied her. Nor did she, as some women might have done, suspect that Harry had trifled with her feelings. She knew that he had not. She had seen them together, day after day; she knew what his bearing had always been towards her, frank, courteous, and brotherly. He called her by her Christian name; he liked her; her presence was pleasant; she was pretty, sweet, and winning. No; she did not suspect him. And yet, what should she say to the poor girl? how comfort her? how reconcile her to the inevitable sorrow?

'Nelly,' she whispered at parting, 'if you are unhappy, my child, you must tell me what it is.'

'I cannot,' Nelly replied. 'But oh! do not think about me, Miss Kennedy; I am not worth it.'

Perhaps she, too, had read those same signs, and knew what they meant.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

HARRY FINDS LIBERTY.

Mention has been made of the Stepney Advanced Club, where Dick Coppin thundered, and burning questions were discussed, and debates held on high political points, and where more ideas were submitted and more projects set forth in a single year than in all the rest of London in two years. The members of the Advanced Club were mostly young men, but there was a sprinkling among them of grizzled beards who remembered '48 and the dreams of Chartism. They had got by this time pretty well all they clamoured for in their bygone days, and when they thought of this, and remembered how everything was to go well as soon as the five points of the Charter were carried, and how everything still remained in the same upsydown, topsy-turvy, one-sided, muddle-headed perverseness, just as if those points had not been carried, they became sad. Nevertheless, the habit of demanding remained, because the reformer is like the daughter of the horseleech, and still cries for more. Yet they had less confidence than of old in the reformer's great nostrum of destruction. The younger men, of course, were quite sure, absolutely sure, that with a little more upsetting and downpulling the balance would be set right and a beautiful straight level of universal happiness would be reached.

Angela heard, from time to time, of the meetings of this club. Harry told her how his cousin Dick had surpassed himself, how they were going to abolish Crown, Church, and House of Lords, with landlordism, lawyers, established armies, pauperdom, Divesdom, taxes, and all kinds of things which the hateful Tory or that pitiful creature the moderate Liberal considers necessary for the welfare of the State. And she knew that Harry went there and spoke occasionally, and that he had made in a quiet way some sort of mark among the members. One evening, about this time, she met Dick Coppin returning from his work, in which, unlike his cousin, he did not disdain the apron nor the box of tools.

'There's going to be a debate on Sunday,' he said, half shyly and half boastfully, 'at the Club. It's on the Abolition of the House of Lords. I am going to speak, and if you like to come, you and one or two of the girls, I'll pass you in, and you will hear a thing or two that will open your eyes.'

'That is very good of you, Mr. Coppin. I always like to have my eyes opened. Will there be many speakers?'

'There will be ME,' he replied, with simple grandeur. 'I don't think, when I've said my say, that there will remain much more to be said by anybody. Cousin Harry may get up, perhaps'—his face assumed a little uneasiness—'but no, I don't think he will find any holes in me. I've got the facts, I've gone to the right quarter to get 'em. No; he can't deny my facts.'

'Very well, Mr. Coppin. Perhaps we will go to hear you. But be very sure about your facts.'

Angela said nothing about the proposed debate or her intention of being present, but she learned from Harry that there really was going to be a field night, and that Dick Coppin was expected to come out in more than his usual strength. The informant said nothing about his own intentions. Indeed, he had none, but he was falling into the habit of spending an hour or two at the Club on Sunday evening before finishing off with the girls; sometimes he spoke, but oftener he listened and came away silent and reflective. The Advanced Club offered ample material for one who knows how to reflect. Humanity is a grand subject, and, in fact, is the only subject left for an epic poem. But perhaps the action would drag. Here, Harry saw, was a body of men, old and young, all firmly persuaded that things were wrong, that things might be made better, yet casting about blindly for a remedy and crying aloud for a leader. And those who desired to lead them had nothing to offer but a stone instead of bread. The fact that this young man did listen and reflect shows how greatly he was changed from him whom we first met in the Prologue. Regular hours, simple living, reasonably hard work, strengthened his nerves for anything; he was harder; the men with whom he talked were rougher, and the old carelessness was gone. He kept his gaiety of heart, yet it was sobered; he felt responsible; he knew so much more than the men around him, that he felt a consuming desire to set them right, but could not, for he was tongue-tied; he had not yet found liberty, as the old preachers used to say; when he felt most strongly that the speakers were on a false tack, he spoke most feebly; he wanted to be a Prophet, and there were only confused ideas, blurred perceptions to work upon. Now, the first step towards being a Prophet—which is a most laudable ambition—is to see quite clearly oneself and to understand what one means. He could set a man right as to facts; he could shut up a speaker and make the Club laugh, but he could not move them. As yet Harry was only in the position occupied during a long life by the late Prophet of Chelsea, inasmuch as he distinctly perceived the folly of his neighbours, but could teach no way of wisdom. This is a form of prophetical utterance which has never possessed much weight with the people; they want direct teaching, and a leader who knows what he means and whither he would conduct them, if it be only in the direction of one of those poor old worn-out panaceas once warranted to guarantee universal happiness, like the ballot-box. Not that Harry grew miserable over his failure to prophesy, not at all; he only wished for words of wisdom and power, and sat meanwhile with his hands in his pockets and his hat pulled over his eyes, like a Minister in the House of Commons, while the members of the Club poured forth their frothy declamation, each louder than his predecessor, trying to catch the applause of an assembly which generally shouted for the loudest. The times might be out of joint, but Harry felt no certain inspiration as to the way of setting them right; if a thing came to him, he would say it; if not, he would wait. The great secret about waiting is that while a man waits he thinks, and if he thinks in solitude and waits long enough, letting words lie in his brain and listening to ideas which come upon him, sometimes singly and slowly, sometimes in crowds like the fancies of a wakeful night, there presents itself an idea at last which seizes upon him and holds him captive, and works itself out in his brain while he mechanically goes on with the work, the rest, the toil, and the pleasure of his daily life. Solitary work is favourable to meditation; therefore, while Harry was shaping things at his lathe, undisturbed by any one, his brain was at work. And a thought came to him which lay there dimly perceived at first, but growing larger daily till it filled his head and drew unto itself all his other thoughts, so that everything he saw, or read, or heard, or meditated upon, became like a rill or rivulet which goes to swell a great river. And it was this thought, grown into shape at last, which he proclaimed to the members of the Advanced Club on the night of their great debate.

It was not a large Hall, but it was perfectly filled with people;

chiefly they were men and young men, but among them were a good many women and girls. Does it ever occur to the 'better class' that the work of woman's emancipation is advancing in certain circles with rapid strides? That is so, nevertheless; and large, if not pleasant, results may be expected in a few years therefrom. It must be remembered that for the most part they start perfectly free from any trammels of religion. It has been stated that the basis of all their philosophy is, and always will be, the axiom that every one must get as much as possible for herself out of the rather limited rations of Pleasure supplied to Humanity. Whether that is true I know not. Angela watched these women with curiosity; they were mostly young and some of them were pretty, and there was absolutely nothing to show that they thought differently from any other women. Some of them had brought their work; some were talking; they were not excited by the prospect of the coming debate; they expected, in fact, nothing more than they had already heard over and over again. There was too much gas, the atmosphere was already heavy and the walls already shiny, before the meeting began. On the platform was a chair for the chairman, with a table and a hammer and a decanter of water and a glass. Angela sat far back against the door, with Captain Sorensen and Nelly. She was silent, wondering at these people and why they should trouble themselves about the House of Lords, and whether they never felt any desire at all for the religion which brings joy and happiness to so many suffering lives. Presently she saw Harry walk slowly up the middle aisle and take a place, for there was no chair, on the steps which led to the platform. She was so far back that he could not see her, for which afterwards she was glad.

The chairman, a man stricken in years, with grey hair and a grizzled beard, and one of those ex-Chartists of whom we have spoken, took the chair, hammered the table, and opened the debate. He was a man of great reputation, having been all his life an Irreconcilable, and he was suspected of being a Socialist, and was certainly a Red Republican. He began in the usual way by stating as an axiom that the People can do no wrong; that to entrust the destinies of a Nation to the people is to ensure its greatness; that Manhood is the only rank:—and so forth, all in capital letters with notes of admiration. The words were strong, but they produced no effect, because the speech had been made before a great many times, and the people knew it by heart. Therefore, though it was the right thing to say, and the thing expected of a chairman, nobody paid any attention.

The Discussion, which was all one-sided, then began. Two or three young men rose one after the other; they were listened to with the indulgence which is always accorded to beginners. None of them made a point, or said a good thing, or went outside the crude theories of untaught, if generous, youth; and their ignorance was such as to make Angela almost weep.

Then Dick Coppin mounted the platform, and advanced amid the plaudits of the expectant audience. He ran his fingers through his coarse black hair, straightened himself up to his full height of five feet six, drank a little water, and then, standing beside the chairman's table, with his right hand resting upon it, when he was not waving it about, he began, slowly at first, but afterwards with fluent speech and strong words and a ringing voice, the harangue which he had so carefully prepared. Of course he condemned the House of Lords tooth and nail; it must be destroyed root and branch; it was a standing insult to the common sense of the nation; it was an effete and worn-out institution, against which the enlightenment of the age cried out aloud; it was an obstruction to Progress; it was a menace to the People; it was a thing of the Past; it was an enemy of the working-man; it was a tyrant who had the will but not the power to tyrannise any longer; it was a toothless old wolf who could bark but could not bite. Those free and enlightened men sitting before him, members of the Advanced Club, had pronounced its doom—therefore it must go. The time had come when the nation would endure no longer to have a privileged class, and would be mocked no more by the ridiculous spectacle of hereditary legislators.

He pursued this topic with great freedom of language and a great natural eloquence of a rough and uncultivated kind; his hearers, getting gradually warmed, interrupted him by those plaudits which go straight to the heart of the born orator, and stir him to his strongest and his best.

Then he changed his line and attempted to show that the families which compose the Upper House are themselves, as well as their Institution, worn out, used up, and lost to the vigour which first pushed them to the front. Where were now their fighting men? he asked. Where were their orators? Which among them all was of any real importance to his Party? Which of them had in modern times done anything, proposed anything, or thought of anything for the advancement of knowledge, or the good of the people? Not one able man, he said, among them; luxury had ruined and corrupted all; their blood was poisoned; they could drink and eat; they could practise other luxurious habits, which he enumerated with fidelity, lest there should be any mistake about the matter; and then they could go to the House, reeling into it drunk with wine, and oppose the Will of the People.

Then he turned from generalities to particulars, and entertained his audience with anecdotes gleaned, Heaven knows how, from the private histories of many noble families, tending to show the corruption into which the British Aristocracy had fallen. These anecdotes were received with that keenness which always awaits stories which show how wicked other people are, and what are the newest fashions and hitherto unknown forms of vice. Angela marvelled, on her part, to hear 'Scandal about Queen Elizabeth' at Stepney.

Then, after an impeachment which lasted for half an hour, he thundered forth an appeal—not at all novel to his hearers, yet still effective, because his voice was like a trumpet—to the men before him to rise in their millions, their majesty, and their might, and to tear the accursed thing down.

He sat down, at last, wiping his forehead, and exhausted, but triumphant. Never before had he so completely carried his audience with him; never before had he obtained such flow of language, and such mastery over his voice; never before had he realised so fully that he was, he himself, an orator inferior to none. As he sat down, while the men clapped their hands and cheered, a vision of greatness passed before his mind. He would be the Leader of the People; they should look to him as they had never yet looked to any man for guidance. And he would lead them. Whither? But this, in the dream of the moment, mattered nothing.

A cold chill came over him as he saw his cousin Harry leap lightly to the platform and take his place at the table. For he foresaw trouble; and all the more because those of the audience who knew Gentleman Jack laughed in expectation of that trouble. Fickle and fleeting is the breath of popular favour; only a moment before, and they were cheering him to the skies; now they laughed because they hoped he was to be made to look a fool. But the orator took heart, considering that his facts were undeniable.

When the tumult had subsided, Harry, to everybody's astonishment, laid his hand upon his cousin's shoulder—a gesture of approbation—and looked round the room and said, quietly, but loud enough to be heard by all:

'My cousin, Dick Coppin, can talk. That was a very good speech of his, wasn't it?'

Voices were heard asking if he could better it.

'No,' Harry replied, 'I can't. I wish I could.' He took his place beside the table, and gazed for a few moments at the faces below him. Angela observed that his face was pale, though the carriage of his head was brave. 'I wish,' he repeated 'that I could. Because, after all these fireworks, it is such a tame thing just to tell you that there wasn't a word of sense in the whole speech.'

Here there were signs of wrath, but the general feeling was to let the speaker have his say.

'Do you suppose—any of you—that Dick believes that the Lords go rolling drunk to the House? Of course he doesn't. Do you suppose that he thinks you such fools as to believe it? Of course he doesn't. But then, you see, Dick must have his fireworks. And it was a first-rate speech. Do you suppose he believes that the Lords are a worn-out lot? Not he. He knows better. And if any of you feel inclined to think so, go and look at them. You will find them as well set up as most, and better.

You can hear some of them in the House of Commons, where you send them, you electors. Wherever there are Englishmen, working, fighting, or sporting, there are some of those families among them. As for their corruption, that's fireworks too. Dick has told you some beautiful stories which he challenged anybody to dispute. I dare say they are all true. What he forgot to tell you is that he has picked out these stories from the last hundred and fifty years, and expects you to believe that they all happened yesterday. Shall we charge you members of the Club with all the crimes of the Whitechapel Road for a hundred years? If you want to upset the House of Lords, go and do it. But don't do it with lies on your lips, and on false pretences. You know how virtuous and moral you are yourselves. Then just remember that the members of the House of Lords are about as moral as you are, or rather better. Abolish the House of Lords, if you like. How much better will you be when it is gone? You can go on abolishing. There is the Church. Get it disestablished. Think how much better you will all be when the churches are pulled down. Yet you couldn't stay away any more then than you do. You want the Land Laws reformed. Get them reformed, and think how much land you will get for yourselves out of that Reform.

'Dick Coppin says you have got the Power. So you have. He says the last Reform Bill gave it to you. There he makes a mistake. You have always had the Power. You have always had all the Power there is. It is yours, because you are the people, and what the people want they will have. Your Power is your birthright. You are an irresistible giant who has only to roar in order to get what he wants.

'Well, why don't you roar? Because you don't know what you do want. Because your leaders don't know, any more than yourselves; because they go bawling for things which will do you no good, and they don't know what it is you do want.

'You think that by making yourselves into Clubs and calling yourselves Radicals, you are getting forward. You think that by listening to a chap like my cousin Dick, who's a clever fellow and a devil for fireworks, you somehow improve your own condition. Did you ever ask yourselves what difference the form of Government makes? I have been in America, where, if anywhere, the people have it their own way. Do you think work is more plentiful, wages better, hours shorter, things cheaper in a Republic? Do you think the heels of your boots last any longer? If you do, think so no longer. Whether the House of Lords, or the Church, or the Land Laws stand or fall, that, my friends, makes not the difference of a penny piece to any single man among us. You who agitate for their destruction are generously giving your time and trouble for things which help no man. And yet there are so many things that can help us.

'It comes of your cursed ignorance'—Harry was warming up—'I say, your cursed ignorance. You know nothing: you understand nothing: of your own country. You do not know how its institutions have grown up: why it is so prosperous: why changes, when they have to be made, should be made slowly, and not before they are necessary; nor how you yourselves may climb up, if you will, into a life above you, much happier, much more pleasant. You do not respect the old institutions, because you don't know them; you desire new things because you don't understand the old. Go—learn—make your orators learn and make them teach you. And then send them to the House of Commons to represent you.

'You think that Governments can do everything for you. You FOOLS! Has any Government ever done anything for you? Has it raised your wages? Has it shortened your hours? Can it protect you against rogues and adulterators? Will it ever try to better your position? Never: never: never. Because it cannot. Does any Government ask what you want, what you ought to want? No. Can it give you what you want? No.

'Listen. You want clean streets and houses in which decent folk can live. The Government has appointed sanitary officers. Yet, look about you: put your heads in the courts of Whitechapel —what has the sanitary officer done? You want strong and well-built houses. There are Government inspectors. Yet, look at the lath-and-plaster houses that a child could kick over. You want honest food. All that you eat and drink is adulterated. How does the Government help you there?

'You have the Power—all the Power there is; you cannot use it because you don't know how. You expect the Government to use your Power—to do your work. My friends, I will tell you the secret—whatever you want done you *must do for yourselves*—no one else will do it for you. You must agree that such and such shall be done, and then be very sure, you will get it done.

'In politics you are used as the counters of a game, each side plays with you: not for you, mind. You get nothing, whichever side is in: you are the pawns.

'It is something, perhaps, to take even so much part in the game; but as you get nothing but the honour, I am rather surprised at your going on with it. And if I might advise, it would be that we give that game over and play one by ourselves in which there really is something to be got.

'What we must play for is what we want. What we have got to do is to remember that when we say we will have a thing, nobody can resist us. Have it we must, because we are the masters.

'Now, then, what do we want?'

Harry was quite serious by this time, and so were the faces of those who listened, though there was a little angry doubt on some of them. No one replied to the question. Some of the younger men looked as if they might perhaps have answered in the words of the sailor, 'more rum.' But they refrained, and preserved silence.

'What do we want? Has any one of you ever considered what you do want? Let me tell you a few things—I can't think of many, but I know a few that you ought to put first.

'You want your own local Government. What every little country town has, you have not. You want to elect your own Aldermen, Mayors, Guardians, and School Boards, yourselves—by yourselves. Get that first, and abolish the House of Lords afterwards.

'There is your food. You ought to get your beef from America at threepence a pound, and you are contented to give a shilling; you ought to have your fish at twopence a pound, and you pay whatever they choose to charge you; you drink bad beer, bad spirits, bad tea, bad cocoa, bad coffee—because you don't know that the things are bad and dear, and because you don't understand that you have only got to resolve in order to get all this changed. It is, you see, your cursed ignorance.

'There are your houses. The rich people, having more knowledge than you, and more determination, have found out how to build houses so as to prevent fevers. You live in houses built to catch fever—fever-traps. When you find out what you want, you will refuse to live in such houses, you will refuse to let anybody live in such houses; you will come out of them; you will have them pulled down. When it comes to building up better houses, you will remember that paid inspectors are squared by the builders, so that the cement is mud and sand, and the bricks are crumbling clay, and the walls crack, and the floors are shaky. Therefore, you will be your own inspectors.

'The Government makes us send our children to Board Schools to be educated. That would be very noble of the Government if they at first considered, which nobody has, what sort of education a working-man wants. As yet they have only got as far as spelling. When a boy can spell, they think he is educated. Once it was all Kings of Israel; now it is all spelling. Is that what you want? Do you think it matters how you spell, so that you *know*? Are you contented that your children shall know nothing about this great country, nothing of its wealth and people, nothing of their duties as citizens, nothing of their own trade? Shall they not be taught that theirs is the Power, that they can do what they like and have what they like—if they like? Do you resolve that the education of your children shall be real, and it will become real. But don't look to Government to do it, or it will continue to be Spelling. Find out the thing that you want, and send your own men to the School Boards to get that thing done.

'Another thing that you want is Pleasure. Men can't do without it. Can Government give you that? They can shut the public-houses at twelve. What more can they do? But you—you do not know how to enjoy yourselves. You don't know what to do. You can't play music, nor sing, nor paint, nor dance: you can do nothing. You get no pleasure out of life, and you won't get it, even by abolishing everything.

'Take that simple question of a holiday. We take ours, like the fools we are, all in droves, by thousands and millions, on Bank holidays. Why do we do that? Why do we not insist on having our holidays at different times in the year, without these monstrous crowds which render enjoyment impossible? And why do we not demand—what is granted to every little quill-driving clerk in the City—our fortnight every year, with nothing to do and *drawing full pay*? That is one of your wants, and you don't know it. The reform of the Land Laws, my brothers, will not bring you one inch nearer getting this want.'

At this point the chairman nodded his head approvingly. Perhaps he had never before realised how all his life he had neglected the substance and swallowed the shadow. The old man sat listening patiently with his head in his hands. Never before had any workman, anyone of his own class, spoken like this young fellow, who talked and looked like a swell, though they knew him for what he was. Pleasure! Yes: he had never considered that life might have its delights. Yet, what delights?

'There's another thing, and the blackest of all.' Harry paused a moment. But the men were listening, and now in earnest.

'I mean the treatment of your girls, your sisters and your daughters. Men! You have combined together and made your Unions for yourselves. You have forced upon your employers terms which nothing but combination would have compelled them to accept; you are paid twice what you received twenty years ago; you go in broadcloth; you are well fed; you have money in your pocket. But you have clean forgotten the girls.

'Think of the girls!

'They have no protection but a Government Act, forbidding more than ten hours' work. Who cares for a Government Act? It is defied daily; those who frame these Acts know very well that they are powerless to maintain them. Because, my friends, the Power is with the People—you. If you resolve that an Act shall become a law, you make it so. Everything, in the end, is by the people and through the people.

'You have done nothing for your girls. You leave them to the mercies of employers who have got to cut down expenses to the last farthing. They are paid starvation wages; they are kept in unwholesome rooms; they are bound to the longest hours; they are oppressed with fines. The girls grow up narrow-chested, stooping, consumptive. They are used up wholesale. And what do you do for them? Nothing. There are girls and women in this hall. Can any one of them here get up and say that the working men have raised a finger for them?

'The worst charge any man can bring against you is that you care nothing for your girls.

'Why, it is only the other day that a Dressmakers' Association has been opened among you. You all know where it is; you all know what it tries to do for the girls; yet, what single man among you has ever had the pluck to stand up for his sisters who are working in it?'

Then Harry stepped right to the edge of the platform and spread out his hands, changing his voice.

'You are good fellows,' he said, 'and you've given me fair play. There isn't a country in the world except England where I could have had this fair play. Don't misunderstand me. I tell you, and I don't think you knew it before, that the time has come when the people should leave off caring much about the Government or expecting any good thing for themselves from any Government, because it can't be done in that way. You must find out for yourselves what you want, and then you must have that done. You must combine for these things as you did for wages, and you will get them. And if you spend half the energy in working for yourselves that you have spent in working for things that do you no good, you will be happy indeed.

'Your Politics—I say again—will do nothing for you. Do you hear—NOTHING AT ALL. But yours is the Power. Let us repeat it again and again: all the Power is yours. Try what Government can do. Send Dick Coppin into Parliament—he's a clever chap—and tell him to do what he can for you. He will do nothing. Therefore, work for yourselves, and by yourselves. Make out what you want, and resolve to have it. Nobody can prevent you. The world is yours to do what you like with. Here in England, as in America, the working man is master, provided the working man knows what he wants. The first thing you want, I reckon, is good lodging; the second is good food; the third is good drink—good unadulterated beer, and plenty of it; the fourth is good and sensible education; the fifth is holiday and pleasure; and the last which is also the first, is justice for your girls. But don't be Fools. I have been among you in this Club a good many times. It goes to my heart every time I come to see so many clever men, and able men, wasting their time over grievances which don't hurt them, when they are surrounded by a hundred grievances which they have only to perceive, in order to sweep them away. I am a Radical, like yourselves, but I am a Social Radical. As for your political Jaw, it plays the game of those who use you: Politics is a game of lying accusations, and impossible promises: the accusations make you angry: the promises make you hopeful. But you get nothing in the long run, and you never will: because, promise what they may, it is not laws or measures that will improve our lot: it is by our own resolution that it shall be improved. Hold out your hands and take the things that are offered you. Everything is yours if you like to have it. You are in a beautiful garden filled with fruits, if you care to pick them, but you do not: you lie grubbing in the mud and crying out for what will do you no good. Voices are calling to you: they offer you such a life as was never yet conceived by the lordliest House of Lords, a life full of work and full of pleasure; but you don't hear: you are deaf: you are blind: you are ignorant.' He stopped—a hoarse shout greeted his peroration—Harry wondered for a moment if this was applause or disapproval. It was the former. Then one man rose and spoke.

'Damn him!' he cried. Yet the phrase was used in no condemnatory spirit—as when a mother addresses her boy as a naughty little rogue-pogue. 'Damn him! He shall be our next member.'

'No,' said Harry, clapping his cousin on the shoulder, 'here is your next member, Dick Coppin is your boy. He is clever: he is ambitious: tell him what you want, and he'll get it for you if anyone can. But—oh! men—find out what you want: and have it. Yours—yours—yours is the Power—you are the masters of the world. Leave the humbug of Radicalism and Liberalism and Toryism. Let dead politics bury their dead. Learn to look after your own interests. You are the Kings and Lords of humanity: the old Kings and Lords are no more: they are swept away: they are only shadows of the past. With you are the sceptre and the crown: you sit upon the throne: and when you know how to reign, you shall reign as never yet king was known to reign. *But first, find out what you want.*'

He lightly leapt from the platform, and stepped down the hall. He had said his say, and was going. The men laughed and shouted, half angry, half pleased, but wholly astonished. And Dick Coppin, with a burning cheek, sat humiliated, yet proud of his cousin.

At the door Harry met Miss Kennedy with Captain Sorensen and Nelly.

'We have heard your speech,' said Angela, with brightened eyes and glowing cheeks. 'Oh! what did I tell you? You can speak, you can persuade—you can lead. What a career—what a career—lies before the man who can persuade and lead!'

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE FIGUREHEADS.

It was Sunday morning, after breakfast, and Harry was sitting in the boarding-house common room, silently contemplating his two fellow-boarders, Josephus and Mr. Maliphant. The circle at Bormalack's was greatly broken up. Not to speak of the loss of the illustrious pair, Daniel Fagg had now taken to live entirely among the dressmakers, except in the evenings, when their music and dancing drove him away; in fact, he regarded the place as his own, and had so far forgotten that he took his meals there by invitation as to criticise the dinners, which were always good, although plain, and to find fault with the beer, which came from Messenger's. Miss Kennedy, too, only slept at the boarding-house, though by singular forgetfulness she always paid the landlady every Saturday morning in advance for a week's board and lodging. Therefore Josephus and the old man for the most part sat in the room alone, and were excellent company, because the ill-used junior clerk never wanted to talk with anybody, and the aged carver of figureheads never wanted a listener.

Almost for the first time, Harry considered this old man, the rememberer of fag ends and middlebits of anecdote, with something more than a passing curiosity and a sense of irritation caused by the incongruity of the creature. You know that whenever you seriously address yourself to the study of a person, however insignificant in appearance, that person assumes an importance equal to that of any lord. A person, you see, is an individual, or an indivisible thing. Wherefore, let us not despise our neighbour. The ancient Mr. Maliphant was a little, thin old man, with a few grey hairs left, but not many; his face was enwrapped, so to speak, in a pair of very high collars, and he wore a black silk stock, not very rusty, for he had been in the reign of the fourth George a dapper young fellow, and possessed a taste in dress beyond the lights of Limehouse. But this was in his nautical days, and before he developed his natural genius for carving ship's figureheads. He had no teeth left, and their absence greatly shortened the space between nose and chin, which produced an odd effect; he was closely shaven; his face was covered all over like an ocean with innumerable wrinkles, crowsfeet, dimples, furrows, valleys, and winding watercourses, which showed like the universal smile of an accurate map. His forehead, when the original thatch was thick, must have been rather low and weak; his eyes were still bright and blue, though they wandered while he talked; when he was silent they had a far-off look; his eyebrows, as often happens with old men, had grown bushy and were joined across the bridge; when his memory failed him, which was frequently the case, they frowned almost as terribly as those of Daniel Fagg; his figure was spare and his legs thin, and he sat on one side of the chair with his feet twisted beneath it; he never did anything, except to smoke one pipe at night; he never took the least notice of anybody; when he talked, he addressed the whole company, not any individual; and he was affected by no man's happiness or suffering. He had lived so long that he had no more sympathy left; the world was nothing more to him; he had no further interest in it; he had gone beyond it and out of it; he was so old that he had not a friend left who knew him when he was young; he lived apart; he was, perforce, a hermit.

Harry remembered, looking upon this survival, that the old man had once betrayed a knowledge of his father and of the early history of the Coppin and Messenger families. He wondered now why he had not tried to get more out of him. It would be a family chronicle of small beer, but there could be nothing, probably, very disagreeable to learn about the career of the late sergeant, his father, nor anything painful about the course of the Coppins. On this Sunday morning, when the old man looked as if the cares of the week were off his mind, his memory should be fresh—clearer than on a week-day.

In the happy family of boarders, none of whom pretended to take the least interest in each other, nobody ever spoke to Mr. Maliphant, and nobody listened when he spoke: nobody, except Mrs. Bormalack, who was bound by rules of politeness, took the least notice of his coming or of his going; nobody knew how he lived or what he paid for his board and lodging, or anything else about him. Once, it was certain, he had been in the mercantile marine. Now he had a 'yard'; he went to this yard every day; it was rumoured that in this yard he carved figureheads all day for large sums of money; he came home in the evening in time for supper; a fragrance, as of rum and water, generally accompanied him at that time; and after a pipe and a little more grog, and a few reminiscences chopped up in bits and addressed to the room at large, the old fellow would retire for the night. A perfectly cheerful and harmless old man, yet not companionable.

'Did you know my father, Mr. Maliphant?' asked Harry, by way of opening up the conversation. 'He was a sergeant, you know, in the army.'

Mr. Maliphant started and looked bewildered; he had been, in imagination, somewhere off Cape Horn, and he could not get back at a moment's notice. It irritated him to have to leave his old friends.

'Your father, young gentleman?' he asked in a vexed and trembling quaver. 'Did I know your father? Pray, sir, how am I to know that you ever had a father?'

'You said the other day that you did. Think again. My father, you know, married Caroline Coppin.'

'Ay, ay—Caroline Coppin—I remember Caroline Coppin. Oh! Yes, sister she was to Bob—when Bob was third mate of a East Indiaman; a devil of a fellow was Bob, though but a boy, and if living now, which I much misdoubt, would be but sixty or thereabouts. Everybody, young man, knew Bob Coppin,' . . . . here he relapsed into silence. When he spoke again, he carried on aloud the subject of his thoughts—'below he did his duty. Such a man, sir, was Bob Coppin.'

'Thank you, Mr. Maliphant. I seem to know Bob quite well from your description. And now he's gone aloft, hasn't he? And when the word comes to pass all hands, there will be Bob with a hitch of his trousers and a kick of the left leg. But about my mother?'

'Young gentleman, how am I to know that you were born with a mother? Law! law! One might as well—' here his voice dropped again and he finished the sentence with the silent motion of his lips.

'Caroline Coppin, you know; your old friend.'

He shook his head.

'No, oh! no. I knew her when she was as high as that table. My young friend, not my old friend, she was. How could she be my old friend? She married Sergeant Goslett, and he went out to India and—and—something happened there. Perhaps he was cast away. A many get cast away in those seas.'

'Is that all you remember about her?'

'I can remember,' said the old man, 'a wonderful lot of things at times. You mustn't ask any man to remember all at once. Not at his best, you mustn't, and I doubt I am hardly at what you may call my tip-top ripest—yet. Wait a bit, young man; wait a bit. I've been to a many ports and carved figureheads for a many ships, and they got cast away, one after the other, but dear to memory still, and paid for. Like Sergeant Goslett. A handsome man he was, with curly brown hair, like yours, young gentleman. I remember how he sang a song in this very house when Caroline—or was it her sister?—had it, and I forget whether it was before Bunker married her sister or after Caroline's baby was born, which was when the child's father was dead. A beautiful evening, we had.'

Caroline's baby, Harry surmised, was himself.

'Where was Caroline's baby born?' Harry asked.

'Where should he be? Why, o' course, in his mother's own house.'

'Why should he be born in his mother's own house? I did not know that his mother had a house.'

The old man looked at him with pity.

'Young man,' he said, 'you know nothing. Your ignorance is shameful.'

'But why?'

'Enough said, young gentleman,' replied Mr. Maliphant, with dignity. 'Enough said: youth should not sport with age: it doth not become grey hairs to—to—'

He did not finish the sentence, except to himself, but what he did say was something emphatic and improving, because he shook his head a good deal over it.

Presently he got up and left the room. Harry watched him getting his hat and tying his muffler about his neck. When things were quite adjusted the old man feebly tottered down the steps. Harry took his hat and followed him.

'May I walk with you, sir?' he asked.

'Surely, surely!' Mr. Maliphant was surprised; 'it is an unusual thing for me to have a companion. Formerly, they came—ah!—all the way from Rotherhithe to—to—sing and drink with me.'

'Will you take my arm?' Harry asked.

The little old man, who wore black trousers and a dress-coat out of respect to the day, but, although the month was December, no great-coat—in fact, he had never worn a great-coat in all his life—was trotting along with steps which shewed weakness but manifest intention. Harry wondered where he meant to go. He took the proffered arm, however, and seemed to get on better for the support.

'Are you going to church, sir? asked Harry, when they came opposite the good old church of Stepney, with its vast acres of dead men, and heard the bells ringing.

'No, young gentleman, no, certainly not. I have more important business to look after.'

He quickened his steps, and they left the church behind them.

'Church?' repeated Mr. Maliphant, with severity. 'When there's Property to look after, the bells may ring as loud as they please. Church is good for paupers and churchwardens. Where would the Property be, do you think, if I were not on the spot every day to protect it?'

He turned off the High Street into a short street of small houses, neither better nor worse than the thousands of houses around: it was a *cul-de-sac*, and ended in a high brick wall with a large gateway in the middle and square stone pillars and a ponderous pair of wooden gates, iron bound, as if they guarded things of the greatest value. There was also a small wicket beside it, which the old man carefully unlocked and opened, looking round to see that no burglars followed.

Harry saw, within, a tolerably large yard, in the middle of which was a little house of one room. The house was a most wonderful structure; it was built apparently of packing-cases nailed on four or eight square posts: it was furnished with a door, a window, and a chimney, all complete; it was exactly like a doll's house, only that it was rather larger, being at least six feet high and eight feet square. The house was painted green; the roof was painted red; the door blue; there was also a brass knocker; so that in other respects it was like a doll's house.

'Aha!' cried the old man, rubbing his hands and pointing to the house. 'I built it, young man. That is my own house, that is; I laid the foundations; I put up the walls; I painted it. And I very well remember when it was. Let me see: Mr. Messenger, who was a younger man than me by four years, married in that year, or lost his son—I forget which,' his voice lowered, and he went on talking to himself—'Caroline's grandfather went bankrupt in the building trade; or her father, perhaps, who afterwards made money and left houses. And here I am still. This is my Property, young gentleman, and I come here every day to execute orders. Oh! yes,'—he looked about him in a kind of mild doubt—'I execute orders. Perhaps the orders don't come in so thick as they did. But here I am—ready for work—always ready, and I see my old friends too, aha! They come as thick as ever, bless you, if the orders don't. Quite a gathering in here, some days.' Harry shuddered, thinking who these old friends might be. 'Sundays and all I come here, and they come too. A merry company!'

The garrulous old man opened the door of the little house. Harry saw that it contained a cupboard with some simple cooking utensils, and a fireplace, where the proprietor began to make a fire, and one chair, and a little table, and a rack with tools; there were also one or two pipes and a tobacco jar.

He looked about the yard. A strange place, indeed! It was adorned or rather furnished with great ships' figureheads, carved in wood, standing in rows and circles, some complete, some half finished, some just begun; so that here was a Lively Peggy with rudimentary features just emerging from her native wood, and here a Saucy Sal of Wapping still clothed in oak up to her waist; and here a Neptune, his crowned head only as yet indicated, though the weather-beaten appearance of his wood showed that the time was long since he was begun; or a Father Thames, his god-like face as yet showing like a blurred dream. Or there were finished and perfect heads, painted and gilded, waiting for the purchaser who never came. They stood or sat—whichever a head and shoulder can be said to do—with so much pride, each so rejoicing in himself, and so disdainful of his neighbour, in so haughty a silence, that they seemed human and belonging to the first circles of Stepney; Harry thought, too, that they eyed him curiously, as if he might be the long-expected shipowner come to buy a figurehead.

'Here is Property, young man!' cried the old man; he had lit his fire now and came to the door, craning forward and spreading his hands. 'Look at the beauties. There's truth! There's expression! Mine, young man, all mine. Hundreds—thousands of pounds here, to be protected.'

'Do you come here every day?' Harry asked.

'Every day. The Property must be looked after.'

'And do you sit here all day, by yourself?'

'Why, who else should I sit with? And a man like me never sits alone. Bless your heart, young gentleman, of a morning, when I sit before the fire and smoke a pipe, this room gets full o' people. They crowd in, they do. Dead people, I mean, of course. I know more dead men than living. They're the best company, after all. Bob Coppin comes, for one.'

Harry began to look about, wondering whether the ghost of Bob might suddenly appear at the door. On the whole, he envied the old man his company of departed friends.

'So you talk,' he said; 'you and the dead people.' By this time the old man had got into his chair, and Harry stood in the doorway, for there really was not room for more than one in the house at the same time, to say nothing of inconveniencing and crowding the merry company of ghosts.

'You wouldn't believe,' said the old man, 'the talks we have nor the yarns we spin, when we're here together.'

'It must be a jovial time,' said Harry. 'Do they drink?'

Mr. Maliphant screwed up his lips and shook his head mysteriously.

'Not of a morning,' he replied, as if in the evening the old rollicking customs were still kept up.

'And you talk about old times—eh?'

'There's nothing else to talk about, as I know.'

'Certainly not. Sometimes you talk about my—about Caroline Coppin's father, I suppose. I mean the one who made money, not the one who went bankrupt.'

'Houses,' said Mr. Maliphant; 'houses it was.'

'Oh!'

'Twelve houses there were, all his own. Two sons and two daughters to divide among. Bob Coppin sold his at once—Bunker bought 'em—and we drank up the money down Poplar way, him and me and a few friends together in a friendly and comfortable spirit. A fine time we had, I remember. Jack Coppin was in his father's trade, and he lost his money; speculated, he did. Builders are a believin' people. Bunker got his houses, too.'

'Jack was my cousin Dick's father, I suppose,' said Harry. 'Go ahead, old boy. The family history is reeling out beautifully. Where did the other houses go?'

But the old man had gone off on another tack.

'There were more Coppins,' he said. 'When I was a boy, to be a Coppin of Stepney was a thing of pride. Josephus's father was Churchwarden and held up his head.'

'Did he, really?'

'If I hadn't the Property to look after, I would show you his tombstone in Stepney churchyard.'

'That,' said Harry, 'would be a great happiness for me. As for Caroline Coppin, now——'

'She was a pretty maid, she was,' the old man went on. 'I saw her born and brought up. And she married a sojer.'

'I know, and her three houses were lost too, I suppose?'

'Why should her houses be lost, young man?' Mr. Maliphant asked with severity. 'Houses don't run away. This Property doesn't run away. When she died, she left a baby, she did, and when the baby was took—or was stolen—or something—Bunker said those houses were his. But not lost. You can't lose a house. You may lose a figurehead;' he got up and looked outside to see if his were safe—'or a big drum. But not a house.'

'Oh!' Harry started. 'Bunker said the houses were his, did he?'

'Of course he did.'

'And if the baby had not died, those houses would still be the property of that baby, I suppose?'

But Mr. Maliphant made no reply. He was now in the full enjoyment of the intoxication produced by his morning pipe, and was sitting in his arm-chair with his feet on the fender, disposed, apparently, for silence. Presently he began to talk, as usual, to himself. Nor could he be induced, by any leading questions, to remember anything more of the things which Harry wanted him to remember. But he let his imagination wander. Gradually the room became filled with dead people, and he was talking with them. Nor did he seem to know that Harry was with him at all.

Harry slipped quietly away, shutting the door after him, so that the old man might be left quite alone with his ghosts.

The yard, littered with wood, crowded with the figureheads, all of which seemed turning inquiring and jealous eyes upon the stranger, was silent and ghostly. Thither came the old man every day, to sit before the fire in his little red and green doll's house, to cook his own beefsteak for himself, to drink his glass of grog after dinner, to potter about among his carved heads, to talk to his friends the ghosts, to guard his Property, and to execute the orders which never came. For the shipbuilders who had employed old Mr. Maliphant were all dead and gone, and nobody knew of his yard any more, and he had it all to himself. The tide of time had carried away all his friends and left him alone; the memory of him among active men was gone; no one took any more interest in him: and he had ceased to care for anything: to look back was his only pleasure. No one likes to die at any time, but who would wish to grow so very old?

And those houses! Why, if the old man's memory was right, then Bunker had simply appropriated his property. Was that, Harry asked, the price for which he traded the child away?

He went straight away to his cousin Dick, who, mindful of the recent speech at the Club, was a little disposed to be resentful. It fortunately takes two to make a quarrel, however, and one of those two had no intention of a family row.

'Never mind, Dick,' he said, in answer to an allusion to the speech. 'Hang the Club. I want to ask you about something else. Now, then. Tell me about your grandfather.'

'I cannot. He died before I can remember. He was a builder.'

'Did he leave property?'

'There were some houses, I believe. My father lost his share, I know. Speculated it away.'

'Your uncle Bob—what became of his share?'

'Bob was a worthless chap. He drank everything, so of course he drank up his houses.'

'Then we come to the two daughters. Bunker married one, and of course he got his wife's share. What became of my mother's share?'

'Indeed, Harry, I do not know.'

'Who would know?'

'Bunker ought to be able to tell you all about it. Of course he knows.'

'Dick,' said Harry, 'should you be astonished to learn that the respectable uncle Bunker is a mighty great rogue? But say nothing, Dick. Say nothing. Let me consider how to bring the thing home to him.'

CHAPTER XXX.

THE PROFESSOR'S PROPOSAL.

When the Professor called upon Angela that same Sunday morning and requested an interview, she perceived that something serious was intended. He had on, as if for an occasion, a new coat with a flower in the buttonhole—a chrysanthemum. His face was extremely solemn, and his fingers, which always seemed restless and dissatisfied unless they were making things disappear and come again, were quite still. Certainly, he had something on his mind.

The drawing-room had one or two girls in it, who were reading and talking, though they ought to have been in church—Angela left their religious duties to their own consciences. But the dining-room was empty, and the interview was held there.

The Professor had certainly made up in his own mind exactly what was going to be said; he had dramatised the situation—a very good plan if you are quite sure of the replies; otherwise, you are apt to be put out.

'Miss Kennedy,' he began, with a low voice, 'allow me, first of all, to thank you for your great kindness during a late season of depression.'

'I am glad it is a *late* season,' said Angela; 'that means, I presume, that the depression has passed away.'

'Quite, I am glad to say; in fact,' the Professor laughed cheerfully, 'I have got engagements from now till nearly the end of April, in the country, and am in treaty for a West-end engagement in May. Industry and application, not to speak of talent, will make their way in the long run. But I hope I am none the less grateful to you for your loan—let me call it a loan—when things were tight. I assure you, Miss Kennedy, that the run into the country, after those parish registers, was as good as a week's engagement, simple as it looked; and as for that Saturday night for your girls——'

'Oh! Professor, we were agreed that it should appear to be given by you for nothing.'

'Never mind what was agreed. You know very well what was paid for it. Now, if it hadn't been for that night's performance and that little trip into the country, I verily believe they would have had to send for a nice long box for me, a box that can't be palmed, and I should have gone off in it to a country where perhaps they don't care for conjuring.'

'In that case, Professor, I am very glad to have been of help.'

'And so,' he went on—following the programme he had laid down in his own mind; 'And so I have come here to-day, to ask if your interest in conjuring could be stimulated to a professional height.'

'Really, I do not know—professional? You mean——'

'Anybody can see that you've showed an interest in the subject beyond what is expected or found in women. What I came here to-day for is to ask whether you like the conjurer well enough to take to conjuring?

Angela laughed and was astonished after being told by Daniel Fagg that he would honour her by making her his wife, but for certain reasons of age. Now, having become hardened, it seemed but a small thing to receive the offer of a conjurer, and the proposal to join the profession.

'I think it must be the science, Professor,' she said; 'yes; it must be the science that I like so much. Not the man who exhibits his skill in the science. Yes, I think always of your admirable science.'

'Ah!' he heaved a deep sigh, 'you are quite right, Miss; science is better than love. Love! what sort of a thing is that, when you get tired of it in a month? But science fills up all your life—and we are always learning—always.'

'I am so glad, Professor, that I can agree with you entirely.'

'Which makes me bolder,' he said, 'because we could be useful to each other, without pretending to be in love, or any nonsense of that sort.'

'Indeed! Now, I shall be very pleased to be useful to you without, as you say, any foolish pretence or nonsense.'

'The way is this; you can play, can't you?'

'Yes.'

'And sing?'

'Yes.'

'Did you ever dance in tights?'

'No, I never did that.'

'Ah well—it's a pity—but one can't expect everything. And no doubt you'd take to it easy. They all do. Did you ever sing on the stage—at a music-hall, I mean?'

'No; I never did.'

'There was a chap—but I suppose he was a liar—said you used to sing under an electric light at the Canterbury, with a character dance and a topical song and a kick-up at the finish.'

'Yes, Professor. I think that "chap" must certainly be written down a liar. But go on.'

'I told him he was, and he offered to fight me for half-a-crown. When I said I'd do it, and willing, for a bob, he went away. I think he's the fellow Harry Goslett knocked down one night. Bunker put him up to it. Bunker doesn't like you. Never mind him. Look here now.

'I am looking, as hard as I can.'

'There's some things that bring the money in, and some that don't. Dressmaking don't, conjurin' does.'

'Yet, you yourself, Professor——'

'Why?' he asked; 'because I am only four-and-twenty, and not much known as yet. Give me time—wait—Lord! to see the clumsy things done by the men who've got a name; and how they go down! And a child would spot the dodge. Now, mark my words, if you will stand in with me, there's a fortune in it.'

'For your sake, I am glad to hear it, but it must be without me.'

'It's for your sake that I tell you of it.'

He was not in love at all—love and science have never yet really composed their differences—and there was not the least dropping of his voice or any other sign of passion in his speech.

'For your sake,' he repeated, 'because if you can be got to see your way as I see it, there's a fortune for both of us.'

'Oh!'

'Yes. Now, Miss, you listen; conjuring, like most things, is makin' believe and deceivin'. What we do is to show you one thing and to do another. The only thing is, to do it so quick that it shan't be seen, even by the few men who know how it is done. No woman yet was ever able to be a conjurer, which is a rum thing, because their fingers do pretty for music and lacework and such. But for conjurin', they haven't the mind. You want a man's brain for such work.'

'I have always,' said Angela, 'felt what poor weak things we are compared with men.'

'Yes, you are,' continued the Professor gallantly; 'but you do have your uses in the world. Most things have. Now, as a confederate or an assistant, there's nobody like a woman. They do what they are told to do; they are faithful over the secrets; they learn their place on the platform, and they stay there. Some professors carry about a boy with them. But you can't place any real trust in a boy. He's always up to tricks, and if you wallop him, likely as not, next night, he'll take and spoil your best trick, out of revenge. Some have a man to help, but then he learns the secrets and tries to cut you out. But with a woman you're always pretty safe. A daughter's best, because then you pocket all the money yourself; but a wife is next best, so long as she keeps steady and acts on the square.'

'I never thought of it before,' said Angela. 'But I suppose it is as you say, and the real object for which women were created must have been the assistance of conjurers.'

'Of course,' said the Professor, failing to see the delicate sarcasm of this remark. Of course: what better thing could they do? Why: here you sit slaving all day long and all the year round, and what are you better for it? A bare living: that's all you get out of it. Whether you go into shops, behind a bar, or into the workroom, it's the same story: a bare living. Look at the conjurin' line, now. You live in splendour: you go on the stage in a most beautiful costoom—silks and satins, gold and spangles, tights if you like: you travel about the country free; you hear the people clappin' their hands whenever you go on, and believin' that you do it all yourself: you've got nothing to do but just what you are told: and—and that's your life, with pockets full of money and the proud consciousness that you are making your fortune.'

'It certainly seems very beautiful to look at. Are there no drawbacks?'

'None,' answered the enthusiast. 'It's the best profession in the world. There's no danger in it: there's no capital required: all it wants is cleverness. That's why I come to you, because you are a real clever girl, and what's more, you're good-looking. It is not always that looks and brains go together.'

Very well, Professor. Let us come to the point. What is it you want me to do?'

'I want you, Miss Kennedy, to go about the country with me. You shall be my assistant: you shall play the piano and come on dressed in a pink costoom, which generally fetches at an entertainment. Nothing to say: and I will teach you, by degrees, all the dodges; and the way it's done you will learn. You'll be surprised when you find how easy it is, and yet how you can't do it; and when you hear the people telling what they saw, and you know just exactly what they could have seen if they'd had their eyes in their heads, you'll laugh—you will.'

'But I am afraid I can't think——'

'Don't raise difficulties, now,' he spoke persuasively. 'I am coming to them directly. I've got ideas in my head which I can't carry through without a real clever confederate, and you must be that confederate. Electricity, now,' he lowered his voice and whispered, 'none of the conjurers have got a battery at work. Think of new feats of marvel and magic, never before considered possible—and done secret by electricity. What a shame—what a cruel shame—to have let the world get hold of electricity. Why, it ought to have been kept for conjurers. And telephones, again: what a scope there is in a good telephone. You and me together, Miss Kennedy, could knock up an entertainment as nobody yet ever dreamed of. If you could dance a bit, it would be an advantage: but if you won't, of course we must give it up; and as to the dressmaking rubbish, why, in a week you will be wondering how in the world you ever came to waste your time upon it at all while such a chance was going about in the world. Not that I blame you for it: not at all: it was your ignorance kept you out of it, and your good luck threw you in the way of it.'

'That may be so; but still I am not sure——'

'I haven't done yet. Look here, I've been turning the thing over in my own mind a good bit. The only way I can think of for such a girl as you to go about the country with a show, is for you to be married to the showman. So I'll marry you before we start, and then we shall be comfortable and happy, and ready for the fortune to come in, and you'll be quite sure of your share in it.'

'Thank you, Professor.'

'Very good then, no need for thanks. I've got engagements in the country for over three months. We'll marry at once, and you can spend that time in learning.'

Angela laughed. Were women of 'her class,' she thought, so easily won and so unceremoniously wooed? Were there no preliminary advances, soft speeches, words of compliment and flattery?

'I've been laying out a plan,' the Professor went on, 'for the most complete thing you ever saw—never before attempted on any stage—marvellous optical illusion. Hush! ELECTRICITY;' he said this in a stage whisper. 'You are to be a fairy—stale old business, isn't it? but it always pays. Silk stockin's and gauze, with a wand. I'm Sinbad the Sailor—or Robinson Crusoe—it doesn't matter what—and then you——'

'Stay a moment, Professor;' she laid her hand upon his arm; 'you have not waited for my answer. I cannot, unfortunately, marry you, nor can I go about the country with you, nor can I possibly become your confederate and assistant.'

'You can't marry me? Why not? When I offer you a fortune?'

'Not even for the fortune.'

'Why not?'

'Well, for many reasons. One of them is that I cannot leave my dressmaking, rubbish as it seems to you. That is, indeed, a sufficient reason.'

'Oh!' his face becoming very sad. 'And I set my heart upon it! The very first time I saw you, I said to myself, "There's a girl for the business. Never was such a girl!" And to think that you're thrown away on a dressmaking business! Oh! it's too bad. And that you're contented with your lot, humble as it is, when I offer to make you an artist and to give you a fortune! That's what cuts me to the quick—that you should be contented.'

'I am very much ashamed of myself,' said Angela, with contrition. 'But, you see, what you ask is impossible.'

'And I only made up my mind last night, that I would marry you, if nothing else would do.'

'Did you? poor Professor! I am quite sorry for you. But you should never marry a woman unless you are in love with her. Now, it is quite clear that you are not in love with me.'

'Love! I've got my work to think of.'

'Then good morning, Professor; let us part friends, if I cannot accept your offer.'

He took her offered hand with reluctance, and in sorrow more than in anger.

'Do you really understand,' he asked, 'what you are throwing away? Fame and fortune. Nothing less.'

She laughed and drew back her hand, shaking her head.

'Oh! the woman's a fool,' cried the Professor, losing his temper and slamming the door after him.

CHAPTER XXXI.

CAPTAIN COPPIN.

It was at this time that Tom Coppin, Captain Coppin of the Salvation Army, paid his only visit to Angela, that visit which caused so great a sensation among the girls.

He chose a quiet evening early in the week. Why he came has never been quite clear. It was not curiosity, for he had none; nor was it a desire to study the kind of culture which Angela had introduced among her friends, for he had no knowledge of, or desire for, culture at all. Nor does the dressmakers' workshop afford a congenial place for the exercise of that soldier's gifts. He came, perhaps, because he was passing by on his way from a red-hot prayer meeting to a red-hot preaching, and he thought he would see the place which, among others—the Advanced Club, for instance—was keeping his brother from following in his own steps, and helping him to regard the world, its pleasures and pursuits, with eyes of affection. One knows not what he expected to find or what he proposed by going there, because the things he did find completely upset all his expectations, if he had any. Visions, perhaps, of the soul-destroying dance, and the red cup, and the loud laughter of fools, and the talk that is as the crackling of thorns, were in his mind.

The room was occupied, as usual, with the girls, Angela among them; Captain Sorensen was there too; the girls were quietly busy, for the most part, over 'their own' work, because, if they would go fine, they must make their own fineries; it was a frosty night, and the fire was burning clear; in the most comfortable chair beside it sat the crippled girl of whom we know; the place was hers by a sort of right; she was gazing into the flames, listening lazily to the music—Angela had been playing—and doing nothing, with contentment. Life was so sweet to the child when she was not suffering pain, and was warm, and was not hungry, and was not hearing complaints, that she wanted nothing more. Nelly, for her part, sat with hands folded pensively, and Angela wondered, but with knowledge, what, of late days, it was that seemed to trouble her.

Suddenly the door opened, and a man, dressed in a tight uniform of dark cloth and a cap of the same with S. S. upon it, like the Lord Mayor's gold chain, stood before them.

He did not remove his cap, but he looked round the room, and presently called in a loud harsh voice:—

'Which of you here answers to the name of Kennedy?'

'I do,' replied Angela; 'my name is Kennedy. What is yours? and why do you come here?'

'My name is Coppin. My work is to save souls. I tear them out of the very clutches and claws of the devil; I will have them; I leave them no peace until I have won them; I cry aloud to them; I shout to them; I pray for them; I sing to them; I seek them out in their hiding-places, even in their dens and courts of sin; there are none too far gone for my work; none that I will let go once I get a grip of them; once my hand is on them, out they must come, if the devil and all his angels were pulling them the other way. For my strength is not of myself; it is——'

'But why do you come here?' asked Angela.

The man had the same black hair and bright eyes as his brother; the same strong voice, although a long course of street shouting had made it coarse and rough; but his eyes were brighter, his lips more sensitive, his forehead higher; he was like his brother in all respects, yet so unlike that, while the Radical had the face of a strong man, the preacher had in his the indefinable touch of weakness which fanaticism always brings with it. Whatever else it was, however, the face was that of a man terribly in earnest.

'I have heard about you,' he said; 'you are of those who cry peace when there is no peace; you entice the young men and maidens who ought to be seeking pardon, and preaching repentance, and you destroy their souls with dancing and music. I come here to tell you that you are one of the instruments of the devil in this wicked town.'

'Have you really come here, Mr. Coppin, on purpose to tell me that?'

'That,' he said, 'is part of my message.'

'Do you think,' asked Angela, because this was almost intolerable, 'that it is becoming a preacher like yourself to invade a quiet and private house, in order to insult a woman?'

'Truth is not insult,' he said; 'I come here as I would go to a theatre or a singing hall or any soul-destroying place. You shall hear the plain truth. With your music and your dancing and your pleasant ways, you are corrupting the souls of many. My brother is hardened in his unrepentance since he knew you. My cousin goes on laughing, and dances over the very pit of destruction, through you. These girls——'

'Oh!' cried Rebekah, who had no sympathy with the Salvation Army, and felt herself an authority when the religious question was touched, 'they are all mad. Let him go away.'

'I would,' replied the Captain, 'that you were half as mad.

Oh! I know you now: I know you smug professors of a Saturday religion——'

'Your mission,' Angela interrupted, 'is not, I am sure, to argue about another sect. Come, Mr. Coppin, now that you have told us who you are, and what is your profession, and why you come here, you might like to preach to us. Do so, if you will. We were sitting here quietly when you came, and you interrupt nothing. So that, if it would really make you feel any happier, you may preach to us for a few minutes.'

He looked about him in hesitation. This kind of preaching was not in his line: he loved a vast hall with a thousand faces looking at him; or a crowd of turbulent roughs ready to answer the Message with a volley of brickbats; or a chance gathering of unrepentant sinners in a wide thoroughfare. He could lift up his voice to them: but to preach in a quiet room to a dozen girls was new experience.

And it was not the place which he had expected. His brother, in their last interview, had thrown in his teeth this house and its doings as offering a more reasonable solution of life's problems than his own. 'You want everybody,' he said, 'to join you in singing and preaching every day: what should we do when there was nobody left to preach at? Now, there, what they say is, "Let us make ourselves comfortable." There's a deal in that, come to think of it. Look at those girls, now: while you and your Happy Elizas are trampin' in the mud with your flag and your procession, and gettin' black eyes and brickbats, they are singin' and laughin' and dancin', and makin' what fun they can for themselves. It seems to me, Tom, that if this kind of thing gets fashionable, you and your army will be played out.'

Well: he had come to see this place which offered pleasure instead of repentance as a method of improving life. They were not laughing and singing at all: there were no men present except one old gentleman in a blue coat with brass buttons. To be sure, he had a fiddle lying on a chair beside him. There was no indication whatever of the red cup, and no smell of tobacco. Now, pleasure without drink, tobacco, and singing, had been in Tom's unregenerate days incomprehensible. 'I would rather,' said Dick, 'see an army of Miss Kennedy's girls than an army of Hallelujah Pols.' Yet they seemed perfectly quiet. 'Make 'em happy, Tom, first,' said Dick, who was still thinking over Harry's speech as a possible point of departure. Happiness is not a word in the dictionary of men like Tom Coppin: they know not what it means: they know a spree: they understand a drink: they know misery, because it is all round them; the misery of hunger, of disease, of intemperance, of dirt, of evil temper, of violence: the misery which the sins of one bring upon all, and the sins of all bring upon each. Indeed, we need not go to Whitechapel to find out misery. But they know not happiness. For such as Captain Coppin there is, as an alternative for misery, the choice of Glory.

What they mean by Glory is the ecstasy, the rapture, the mysteries of emotional religion: he, they believe is the most advanced who is most often hysterical: Tom, like many of his followers, yearned honestly and unselfishly to extend this rapture which he himself so often enjoyed; but that there should be any other way out of misery save by way of the humble stool of Conviction was a thing which he could not understand. Happiness, calm, peace, content, the sweet enjoyment of innocent recreation,—these things he knew nothing of; they had not come in his way.

He had come: he had seen: no doubt, the moment his back was turned the orgies would begin. But he had delivered his message: he had warned the young woman who led the girls—that calm, cold woman who looked at him with curiosity and was so unmoved by what he said: he might go. With his whole heart he had spoken, and had so far moved no one except the daughter of the Seventh Day Independent—and her only a little. This kind of thing is very irritating. Suppose you were to put a red-hot poker into a jug of water without producing any steam or hissing at all; how, as a natural philosopher, would you feel?

'You may preach to us, if you like,' said Miss Kennedy.

She sat before him, resting her chin upon her hand. He knew that she was beautiful, although women and their faces, graces, and sweet looks played no part at all in his thoughts. He felt, without putting the thing into words, that she was beautiful; also, that she regarded him with a kind of contempt, as well as curiosity; also, that she had determined not to be moved by anything he might say; also, that she relied on her own influence over the girls. And he felt for a moment as if his trusty weapons were dropping from his hands, and his whole armour was slipping from his shoulders. Not her beauty: no: fifty Helens of Troy would not have moved this young apostle: but her position as an impregnable outsider. For against the curious outsider, who regards Captains in the Salvation Army only as so many interesting results of growing civilisation, their officers are powerless indeed.

If there is any real difference between the working man of England and the man who does other work, it is that the former is generally emotional and the latter is not. To the man of emotion things cannot be stated too strongly; his leader is he who has the greatest command of adjectives; he is singularly open to the charm of eloquence; he likes audacity of statement; he likes to be moved by wrath, pity, and terror; he has no eye for shades of colour; and when he is most moved he thinks he is most right. It is this which makes him so angry with the people who cannot be moved.

Angela was one of those persons who cannot be moved by the ordinary methods. She looked at Tom as if he was some strange creature; watching what he did, listening to what he said, *as if she was not like unto him.* It is not quite a fair way of describing

Angela's attitude of mind; but it is near enough; and it represents what passed through the brain of the Salvation Captain.

'Will you preach to us?' she repeated a third time.

He mechanically opened his hymn-book.

'Number three hundred and sixty-two,' he said quietly.

He sang the hymn all by himself, at the top of his voice, so that the windows rattled, to one of those rousing and popular melodies which have been pressed into the service of the Army; it was, in fact, 'Molly Darling,' and the people on Stepney Green asked each other in wonder if a meeting of the Salvation Army was actually being held at Miss Kennedy's.

When he had finished his hymn, he began to preach.

He stammered at first, because the surroundings were strange; besides, the cold, curious eyes of Miss Kennedy chilled him. Presently, however, he recovered self-possession, and began his address.

There is one merit, at least, possessed by these preachers: it is that of simplicity. Whatever else they may be, they are always the same; even the words do not vary, while there is but one idea.

If you want to influence the dull of comprehension, such as the common donkey, there is but one way possible. He cannot be led, or coaxed, or persuaded; he must be thwacked. Father Stick explains and makes apparent, instantly, what the logic of all the schools has failed to prove. In the same way, if you wish to awaken the spiritual emotions among people who have hitherto been strange to them, your chance is not by argument, but by appeals, statements, prophecies, threats, terrors, and pictures, which, in fact, do exactly correspond, and produce the same effect as Father Stick; they are so many knock-down blows; they belabour and they terrify.

The preacher began: the girls composed themselves to listen, with the exception of Rebekah, who went on with her work ostentatiously, partly to show her disapproval of such irregular proceedings, and partly as one who, having got the Truth from an independent source and being already advanced in the narrow way, had no occasion for the Captain's persuasion.

It is one thing to hear the voice of a street preacher in his own church, so to speak, that is, on the curbstone, and quite another thing to hear the same man and the same sermon in a quiet room. Tom Coppin had only one sermon, though he dressed it up sometimes, but not often, in new words. Yet it was relieved of monotony by the earnestness which he poured into it. He believed in it himself: that goes a long way. Angela began by thinking of the doctrine, but presently turned her attention to the preacher, and began to think what manner of man he was. Personally he was pale and thin, with strong black hair, like his brother, and his eyes were singularly bright.

Here was a man of the people; self-taught, profoundly ignorant as to the many problems of life and their many solutions; filled, however, with that noble sympathy which makes prophets, poets, martyrs; wholly possessed of faith in his narrow creed; owning no authority of church or priest: believing himself under direct Divine guidance, chosen and called, the instrument of merciful Heaven to drag guilty souls from the pit; consciously standing as a servant day and night before a Throne which other men regard afar off, or cannot see at all; actually living the life of hardship, privation, and ill-treatment which he preached; for the sake of others, enduring hardness, poverty, contumely; taking all these things as part and parcel of the day's work; and in the name of duty, searching into corners and holes of this great town for the vilest, the most hardened, the most depraved, the most blinded to a higher life.

This, if you please, is not a thing to be laughed at. What did Wesley more? What did Whitefield? Nay—what did Paul?

They paid him for his services, it is true; they gave him five-and-twenty shillings a week; some of this great sum he gave away; the rest provided him with poor and simple food. He had no pleasures or joys of life; he had no recreations; he had no hope of any pleasures; some of the officers of his Army—being men and women as well as preachers—loved each other and were married; but this man had no thought of any such thing; he, as much as any monk, was vowed to the service of the Master, without rest or holiday, or any other joy than that of doing the work that lay before him.

A great pity and sympathy filled Angela's heart as she thought of these things.

The man before her was for the moment a prophet; it mattered nothing that his creed was narrow, his truths only half-truths, his doctrine commonplace, his language in bad taste, his manner vulgar; the faith of the man covered up and hid these defects; he had a message to mankind; he was delivering that message; to him it was a fresh new message; never before entrusted to any man; he had to deliver it perpetually, even though he went in starvation.

Angela's heart softened as she realised the loyalty of the man. He saw the softening in her eyes, and thought it was the first sign of conviction.

But it was not.

Meantime, if Angela was thinking of the preacher, the girls of course, with the exception of Rebekah, were trembling at his words.

Suddenly—the unexpected change was a kind of rhetorical trick which often proved effective—the preacher ceased to denounce and threaten, and spoke of pardon and peace; he called upon them in softer voice, in accents full of tears and love, to break down their pride, to hear the voice that called them . . . . We know well enough what he said, only we do not know how he said it. Angela looked about the room. The Captain sat with his hands on his knees and his face dutifully lifted to the angle which denotes attention; his expression was unmoved; evidently, the Captain was not open to conviction. As for the girls, they might be divided into classes. They had all listened to the threats and the warnings, though they had heard them often enough before; now, however, some of them seemed as if they were impatient, and as if with a little encouragement they could break into scoffing. But others were crying, and one or two were steadfastly regarding the speaker, as if he had mesmerised them. Among these was Nelly. Her eyes were fixed, her lips were parted, her breathing was quick, her cheek was pale.

Great and wonderful is the power of eloquence; there are few orators; this ex-printer, this uneducated man of the ranks, was, like his brother, born with the gift that is so rare. He should have been taken away and taught, and kept from danger, and properly fed and cared for. And now it is too late. They said of him in his Connection that he was blessed in the saving of souls; the most stubborn, the most hardened, when they fell under the magic of his presence and his voice, were broken and subdued: what wonder that a weak girl should give way?

When he paused he looked round; he noted the faces of those whom he had mesmerised; he raised his arm; he pointed to Nelly, and beckoned her without a word to rise.

Then the girl stood up as if she could not choose but obey. She moved a step towards him; in a moment she would have been at his feet, with sobs and tears, in the passion of self-abasement which is so dear to the revivalist. But Angela broke the spell. She sprang towards her, caught her in her own arms, and passed her hand before her eyes.

'Nelly!' she said gently; 'Nelly, dear!'

The girl sank back in her chair and buried her face in her hands. But the moment was gone, and Captain Coppin had lost his recruit.

They all breathed a deep sigh. Those who had not been moved looked at each other and laughed; those who were, dried their eyes and seemed ashamed.

'Thank you,' said Angela to the preacher. 'You have preached very well, and I hope your words will help us on our way, even though it is not quite your way.'

'Then, be of our way. Cease from scoffing.'

She shook her head.

'No, I do not scoff, but I cannot join your way. Leave us now, Mr. Coppin. You are a brave man. Let us reverence courage and loyalty. But we will have no more sermons in this room. Good night!'

She offered him her hand, but he would not take it, and with a final warning addressed to Angela in particular and the room in general, he went as he had come, without greeting or word of thanks.

'These Salvation people,' said Rebekah, 'are all mad. If people want the way of truth there's the chapel in Redman's Row, and father's always in it every Saturday.'

'What do you say, Captain Sorensen?' asked Angela.

'The Church of England,' said the Captain, who had not been moved a whit, 'says that two sacraments are necessary. I find nothing about stools of repentance. Come, Nelly, my girl, remember that you are a Churchwoman.'

'Yet,' said Angela, 'what are we to say when a man is so brave and true and when he lives the life? Nelly dear—girls all—I think that religion should not be a terror, but a great calm and a trust. Let us love each other, and do our work, and take the simple happiness that God gives, and have faith. What more can we do? To-night, I think, we cannot dance or sing, but I will play to you.'

She played to them—grand and solemn music—so that the terror went out of their brains, and the hardening out of their hearts, and next day all was forgotten.

In this manner, and this once, did Tom Coppin cross Angela's path. Now he will cross it no more, because his work is over. If a man lives on less than the bare necessaries, in order to give to others, if he does the work of ten men, if he gives himself no rest any day in the week, what happens to that man when typhus seizes him?

He died, as he had lived, in glory, surrounded by Joyful Jane, Hallelujah Jem, Happy Pol, Thankful Sarah, and the rest of them. His life has been narrated in the 'War Cry'; it is specially recorded of him that he was always 'on the mountains'; which means, in their language, that he was a man of strong faith, free from doubt, and of emotional nature.

The extremely wicked and hardened family, consisting of an old woman and half-a-dozen daughters, for whose souls' sake he starved himself, and thereby fell an easy prey to the disease, have nearly all found a refuge in the workhouse, and are as hardened as ever, though not so wicked, because some kinds of wickedness are not allowed in that palace of virtue. Therefore it seems almost as if poor Tom's life has been fooled away. According to a philosophy which makes a great deal of noise just now, every life is but a shadow, a dream, a mockery, a catching at things impossible, and a waste of good material, ending with the last breath. Then, all our lives are fooled away, and why not Tom's as well as the rest? But if the older way of thinking is, after all, right; then that life can hardly have been wasted which was freely given—even if the gift was not accepted—for the advantage of others. Because the memory and the example remain, and every example—if boys and girls could only be taught this copy-book truth—is like an inexhaustible horn, always filled with precious seed.

CHAPTER XXXII.

BUNKER AT BAY.

HARRY was thinking a good deal about the old man's strange story of the houses. There was, to be sure, little dependence to be placed in the rambling, disjointed statements made by so old a man; but then, this statement was so clear and precise;—there were so many children; there were so many houses—three for each child; and he knew exactly what became of all those houses. If the story had been told by a man in the prime of life, it could not have been more exact and detailed. But what were the houses? where were they? and how could he prove that they were his own?

What did Bunker get, when he traded the child away?

Harry had always been of opinion that he got a sum of money down, and that he was now ashamed of the transaction and would fain have it remain unknown. This solution accounted, or seemed to account, for his great wrath and agitation when the subject was mentioned. Out of a mischievous delight in making his uncle angry, Harry frequently alluded to the point. But the story of the houses was a better solution still; it accounted for Mr. Bunker's agitation as well as his wrath. But his wrath and his terror appeared to Harry to corroborate very strongly the old man's story. And the longer he thought about it, the more strongly he believed it.

Harry asked his landlady whether, in her opinion, if Mr. Maliphant made a statement, that statement was to be accepted as true.

Mrs. Bormalack replied that as he never made any statement except in reference to events long since things of the past, it was impossible for her to say whether they were true or not; that his memory was clean gone for things of the present, so that of to-day and yesterday he knew nothing; that his thoughts were always running on the old days; and that when he could be heard right through without dropping his voice at all, he sometimes told very interesting and curious things. His board and lodging were paid for him by his grandson, a most respectable gentleman and a dockmaster; and, as to the old man's business, he had none, and had had none for many years, being clean forgotten, although he did go every day to his yard and stayed there all day long.

Harry thought he would pay him another visit. Perhaps something more would be remembered.

He went there again in the morning. The street at the end of which was the yard was as quiet as on the Sunday, the children being at school and the men at work. The great gates were closed and locked, but the small side door was unlocked, When he opened it all the figureheads turned quickly and anxiously to look at him: at least, Harry declares they did, and spiritualists will readily believe him. Was he, they asked, going to take one of them away and stick it on the bow of a great ship and send it up and down upon the face of the ocean to the four corners of the world? Ha! They were made for an active life: they pined away in this inactivity: a fig for the dangers of the deep. From Saucy Sal to Neptune, they all asked the same question in the same hope. Harry shook his head, and they sighed sadly and resumed their former positions, as they were, eyes front, waiting till night should fall and the old man should go, and they could talk with each other.

'This,' thought Harry, 'is a strange and ghostly place.'

You know the cold and creepy feeling caused by the presence—albeit unseen—of ghosts; one may feel it anywhere and at all times: in church: at a theatre: in bed at night: by broad daylight: in darkness: or in twilight. This was in the sunshine of a bright December day—the last days of the year eighty-one were singularly bright and gracious: the place was no dark chamber or gloomy vault, but a broad and open yard, cheerfully decorated with carved figureheads. Yet even here Harry experienced the touch of ghostliness.

The place was so strange that it did not astonish him at all to see the old man suddenly appear in the door of his doll's house, waving his hand and smiling cheerily, as one who speeds the parting guest. The salutations were not intended for Harry, because Mr. Maliphant was not looking at him.

Presently he ceased gesticulating, became suddenly serious (as happens to one when his friend's back is turned or he has vanished), and returned to his seat by the fire.

Harry softly followed and stood before him, waiting to be recognised.

The old man looked up at last and nodded his head.

'Been entertaining your friends, Mr. Maliphant?'

'Bob was here, only Bob. You have just missed Bob,' he replied.

'That's a pity. Never mind. Can you, my ancient, carry your memory back some twenty years? You did it, you know, last Sunday for me.'

'Twenty years? Ay—ay—twenty years. I was only sixty-five or so, then. It seems a long time until it is gone. Twenty years. Well, young man, twenty years. Why, it is only yesterday.'

'I mean to the time when Caroline Coppin, you know, your old friend Caroline, was married.'

'That was twenty years before, and more: when William the Fourth died and Queen Victoria, then a young thing, came long to reign over us——' his voice sank and he continued the rest of his reminiscence to himself.

'But Caroline Coppin?'

'I'm telling you about Caroline Coppin, only you won't listen.'

There was nothing more to be got out of him. His recent conversation with Bob's spirit had muddled him for the day, and he mixed up Caroline with her mother or grandmother. He relapsed into silence, and sat with his long pipe unfilled in his hand, looking into the fireplace, gone back in imagination to the past. As the old man made no sign of conversation, but rather of a disposition to 'drop off' for a few minutes, Harry began to look about the room. On the table lay a bundle of old letters: it was as if the living and the dead had been reading them together. Harry took them up and turned them over, wondering what secrets of long ago were contained in those yellow papers with their faded ink. The old man's eyes were closed: he took no heed of his visitor, and Harry standing at the table began shamelessly to read the letters.

They were mostly the letters of a young sailor addressed to one apparently a good deal older than himself, for they abounded in such appellations as 'my ancient,' 'venerable,' 'old salt,' and so forth; but the young man did not regard his correspondent with the awe which age should inspire, but rather as a gay and rollicking spirit who would sympathise with the high jinks of younger men even if he no longer shared in them, and who was an old and still delighted treader of those flowery paths which are said by moralists to be planted with the frequent pitfall and the crafty trap. The old man, thought Harry, must have been an admirable guide to youth, and the disciple was apt to learn. Sometimes the letters were signed Bob: sometimes R. Coppin: sometimes R. C. Harry therefore surmised that the writer was no other than his own uncle Bob, whose ghost he had just missed.

Bob was an officer on board of an East Indiaman: but he spoke not of such common-place matters as the face of ocean or the voice of the tempest: he only wrote from port, and told what things he had seen and done on shore, and what he had consumed in ardent drink. The letters were brief, which seemed as well, because if literary skill had been present to dress up effectively the subjects treated, a literary monument might have been erected the like of which the world has never seen. It is, indeed, a most curious and remarkable circumstance, that even in realistic France the true course of the Prodigal has never been faithfully described. Now, the great advantage formerly possessed by the sailor—an advantage cruelly curtailed by the establishment of Homes and the introduction of Temperance—was that he could be, and was, a Prodigal at the end of every cruise, while the voyage itself was an agreeable interval provided for recovery, recollection, and anticipation.

'Bob—uncle Bob—was a flyer,' said Harry. 'One should be proud of such an uncle. With Bob, and Bunker, and the bankrupt Builder, I am indeed provided.'

There seemed nothing in the letters which bore upon the question of his mother's property, and he was going to put them down again, when he lighted upon a torn fragment on which he saw, in Bob's big handwriting, the name of his cousin Josephus.

'Josephus, my cousin, that he will'—here a break in the continuity—'nd the safe the bundle'—another break—'for a lark. Josephus is a Square-toes. I hate a man who won't drink. He will'—another break—'if he looks there. Your health and song, shipmet. R.C.'

He read this fragment two or three times over. What did it mean? Clearly nothing to himself. 'Josephus is a Square-toes.' Very likely; the Prodigal Bob was not; quite the contrary; he was a young man of extremely mercurial temperament. 'Josephus, my cousin, that he will . . . . nd the safe the bundle.' He put down the paper, and then, without waking the old man, he softly left the room and the place, shutting the door behind him. And then he forgot immediately the torn letter and its allusion to Josephus. He thought, next, that he would go to Bunker and put the question directly to him. The man might be terrified; might show confusion; might tell lies. That would matter little. But if he showed his hand too soon, Bunker might be put upon his guard. Well, that mattered little. What Harry hoped was rather to get at the truth than to recover his houses.

'I want,' he said, finding his uncle at home and engaged in his office, drawing up bills—'I want a few words of serious talk with you, my uncle.'

'I am busy; go away. I never want to talk to you. I hate the very sight of your face.'

He looked, indeed, as if he did, if a flushing cheek and an angry glare of the eyes are any sign.

'I am not going away until you have answered my questions. As to your hatred or your affection, that does not concern me at all. Now, will you listen, or shall I wait?'

'To get rid of you the sooner,' Bunker growled, 'I will listen now. If I was twenty years younger, I'd kick you out.'

'If you were twenty years younger, there might, it is true, be a fight. Now then.'

'Well, get along. My time is valuable.'

'I have several times asked you what you got for me when you sold me. You have on those occasions allowed yourself to fall into a rage, which is really dangerous in so stout a man. I am not going to ask you that question any more.

Mr. Bunker looked relieved.

'Because, you see, I know now what you got.'

Mr. Bunker turned very pale.

'What do you know?'

'I know exactly what you got when I was taken away.'

Mr. Bunker said nothing. Yet there was in his eyes a look as if a critical moment, long expected, had at last arrived. And he waited.

'When my mother died, and you became my guardian, I was not left penniless.'

'It's a lie. You were.'

'If I had been, you would have handed me over to your brother-in-law, Coppin the builder. But I had property.'

'You had nothing.'

'I had three houses. One of those houses is, I believe, that which has been rented—from you—by Miss Kennedy. I do not know yet where the other two are, but I shall find out.'

'You are on a wrong tack,' said his uncle. 'Now I know why you wouldn't go away; you came here to ferret and fish, did you? You thought you were entitled to property, did you? Ho! You're a nice sort o' chap to have house property, ain't you? Ha! Ho!'

But his laughter was not mirthful.

'Let me point out to you,' Harry went on gravely, 'what it is you have done. The child whom you kept for a year or two was heir to a small estate, bringing in, I suppose, about eighty or a hundred pounds a year. We will say that you were entitled to keep that money in return for his support. But when that child was carried away and adopted, you said nothing about the property. You kept it for yourself, and you have received the rents year after year as if the houses belonged to you. Shall I go on, and tell you what judges and lawyers and police people call this sort of conduct?'

'Where's your proofs?' asked the other, his face betraying his emotion. 'Where's your proofs?'

'I have none yet. I am going to search for those proofs.'

'You can't find them. There are none. Now, young man, you've had your say, and you can go. Do you hear? You can go.'

'You deny, then, that the houses were mine?'

'If you'd come to me meek and lowly, as is your humble station in life, I would ha' told you the history of those houses. Yes, your mother had them, same as her brothers and her sister. Where are they now? I've got 'em. I've got 'em all. How did I get 'em? By lawful and honourable purchase. I bought 'em. Do you want proofs? You sha'n't have any proofs. If you'd behaved humble, you should ha' seen those proofs. Now you may go away and do your worst. Do you hear? You may do your worst.'

He shook his fist in Harry's face; his words were brave; but his voice was shaky and his lips were trembling.

'I don't believe you,' said Harry; 'I am certain that you did not buy my houses. There was no one left to care for my interests, and you took those houses.'

'This is the reward,' said Mr. Bunker, 'for nussin' of this child for nigh upon three years! Who would take an orphan into his bosom! But it was right, and I'd do it again. Yes; I'd do it again.'

'I don't doubt you,' the ungrateful nephew replied, 'especially if that other orphan had three substantial houses and there was nobody but yourself to look after him.'

'As for your proofs, go and look for them. When you've found 'em, bring 'em to me. You and your proofs!'

Harry laughed.

'I shall find them,' he said, 'but I don't know where or when. Meantime, you will go on, as you do now, thinking continually that they may be found; you won't be able to sleep at night; you will dream of police courts; you will let your thoughts run on handcuffs; you will take to drink; you will have no pleasure in your life; you will hasten your end; you will——' here he desisted, for his uncle, dropping into his chair, looked as if he was about to swoon. 'Remember—I shall find these proofs—some day. A hundred a year for twenty years is two thousand pounds; that's a large sum to hand over, and then there is the interest. Upon my word, my uncle, you will have to begin the world again.'

CHAPTER XXXIII.

MR. BUNKER'S LETTER.

Two days after this, Angela received a very wonderful letter. It was addressed to Miss Messenger, and was signed Benjamin Bunker. It ran as follows:—

'Honoured Miss,—As an old and humble friend of your late lamented grandfather, whose loss I can never recover from nor has it yet been made up to me in any way'—Angela laughed—'I venture to address you the following lines in secrecy and confidence knowing that what ought not to be concealed should be told in the proper quarter, which is you Miss and none other.

'Everybody in these parts knows me; everybody knows Bunker, your grandfather's right-hand man; wherefore, what I write is no other design than to warn you and to put you on your guard against the deceitful and such as would abuse your confidingness, being but young as yet, and therefore ignorant of dodges, and easy come round.

'You have been come round, and that in such a shameful way that I cannot bear myself any longer, and must take the liberty of telling you so, being an old and confidential adviser; your grandfather used to say that even the Brewery wouldn't be where it is now, if it hadn't been for me, not to speak of the house property which is now a profitable investment with rents regular and respectable tenants, whereas before I took it in hand, the houses was out of repair, the rents backward and the tenants too often such as would bring discredit on any estate. I therefore beg to warn you against two persons—young, I am sorry to say, which makes it worse, because it is only the old who should be thus depraved—whom you have benefited and they are unworthy of it.

'One of them is a certain Miss Kennedy, a dressmaker, at least she says so. The other is, I write this with the blush of indignant shame, my own nephew, whose name is Harry Goslett.'

'Bunker, Bunker!' murmured Angela, 'is this fair to your own tenant and your own nephew?'

'As regards my nephew, you have never inquired about him, and it was out of your kindness and a desire to mark your sense of me that you gave him a berth in the Brewery. That young man, Miss, who calls himself a cabinet-maker and doesn't seem to know that a joiner is one thing and a cabinet-maker another, now does the joinery for the Brewery, and makes, I am told, as much as two pound a week, being a handy chap. If you had asked me first, I should have told you that he is a lazy, indolent, free and easy, disrespectful, dangerous young man. He has been no one knows where: no one knows where he has worked, except that he talks about America; he looks like a betting man; I believe he drinks of a night; he has been living like a gentleman, doing no work, and I believe, though up to the present I haven't found out for certain, that he has been in trouble and knows what is a convict's feelings when the key is turned. Because he is such a disgrace to the family, for his mother was a Coppin and came of a respectable Whitechapel stock, though not equal to the Bunkers or the Messengers, I went to him and offered him five-and-twenty pound out of my slender stock to go away and never come back any more to disgrace us. Five-and-twenty pound I would have given to save Messenger's Brewery from such a villain.'

'Bunker, Bunker—' murmured Angela again.

'But he wouldn't take the money. You thought to do me a good turn and you done yourself a bad one. I don't know what mischief he has already done in the Brewery and perhaps he is watched; if so it may not yet be too late. Send him about his business. Make him go. You can then consider some other way of making it up to me for all that work for your grandfather whereof you now sweetly reap the benefit.

'The other case, Miss, is that of the young woman, Kennedy by name, the dressmaker.'

'What of her, Bunker?' asked Angela.

'I hear that you are givin' her your custom, not knowing, maybe, the kind of woman she is nor the mischief she's about. She's got a house of mine on false pretences.'

'Really, Mr. Bunker,' said Angela, 'you are too bad.'

'Otherwise I wouldn't let her have it, and at the end of the year out she goes. She has persuaded a lot of foolish girls, once contented with their lowly lot and thankful for their wages and their work, nor inclined to grumble when hours was long and work had to be done. She has promised them the profits and meantime she feeds them up so that their eyes swell out with fatness, she gives them short hours and sends them out into the garden to play games. Games, if you please, and short hours for such as them. In the evening it's worse; for then they play and sing and dance, having young men to caper about with them, and you can hear them half a mile up the Mile End Road so that it is a scandal to Stepney Green, once respectable, and the police will probably interfere. Where she came from, who she was, how she got her money, we don't know. Some say one thing, some say another, whatever they say it's a bad way. The worst is that when she smashes as she must, because no ladies who respect virtue and humblemindedness with contentment will employ her, is that the other dressmakers and shops will have nothing to do with her girls, so that what will happen to them, no one can tell.

'I thought it right, Miss, to give you this information, because it is certain that if you withdraw your support from these two undeserving people, they must go away, which as a respectable Stepney man, I unite in wishing may happen before long, when the girls shall go on again as before and leave dancing and singing to the rich and be humble and contented with the crust to which they were born.

'And as regards the kindness you were meditating towards me, Miss, I think I may say that none of my nephews—one of whom is a Radical, and another a Captain in the Salvation Army—deserves to receive any benefits at your hands, least of all that villain who works in the Brewery. Wherefore, it may take the form of something for myself. And it is not for me to tell you, Miss, how much that something ought to be for a man in years, of respectable station and once the confidential friend of your grandfather, and prevented thereby from saving as much as he had otherwise a right to expect.

'I remain, Miss, Your humble Servant,

'BENJAMIN BUNKER.'

'This,' said Angela, 'is a very impudent letter. How shall we bring him to book for it?'

When she learned, as she speedily did, the great mystery about the houses and the Coppin property, she began to understand the letter, the contents of which she kept to herself for the present. This was perhaps for the theory implied rather than stated in the letter, that both should be ordered to go; for if one only was turned out of work, both would stay. This theory made her smile and blush, and pleased her, insomuch that she was not so angry as she might otherwise have been and should have been with the crafty double-dealer who wrote the letter.

It happened that Mr. Bunker had business on Stepney Green, that morning, while Angela was reading the letter. She saw him from the window, and could not resist the temptation of inviting him to step in. He came not in the least abashed, and with no tell-tale signal of confusion in his rosy cheeks.

'Come in, Mr. Bunker,' said Angela, 'Come in; I want five minutes' talk with you. This way, please, where we can be alone.'

She led him into the refectory, because Daniel Fagg was in the drawing-room.

'I have been thinking, Mr. Bunker,' she said, 'how very, very fortunate I was to fall into such hands as yours, when I came to Stepney.'

'You were, Miss, you were. That was a fall, as one may say, which meant a rise.'

'I am sure it did, Mr. Bunker. You do not often come to see us, but I hope you approve of our plans.'

'As for that,' he replied, 'it isn't my business. People come to me, and I put them in the way. How they run in the way is not my business to inquire. As for you and your girls, now, if you make the concern go, you may thank me for it. If you don't, why it isn't my fault.'

'Very well put indeed, Mr. Bunker. In six months the first year, for which I prepaid the rent, will come to an end.'

'It will.'

'We shall then have to consider a fresh agreement. I was thinking, Mr. Bunker, that, seeing how good a man you are, and how generous, you would like to make your rent, like the wages of the girls, depend upon the profits of the business.'

'What?' he asked.

Angela repeated her proposition.

He rose, buttoned his coat, and put on his hat.

'Rent depend on profits? Is the girl mad? Rent comes first and before anything else. Rent is even before taxes; and as for rates—but you're mad. My rent depend on profits? Rent, Miss, is sacred. Remember that.'

'Oh!' said Angela.

'And what is more,' he added, 'people who don't pay up get sold up. It's a Christian duty to sell 'em up. I couldn't let off even my own nephews.'

'As for one of them, you would like to sell him up, would you not, Mr. Bunker?'

'I would,' he replied truthfully, 'I should like to see him out of the place. You know what I told you when you came. Have nothing to do, I said, with that chap. Keep him at arm's length, for he is a bad lot. Now you see what he has brought you to. Singin', dancin', playin', laughin', every night; respectable ladies driven away from your shop; many actually kept out of the place; expenses doubled; all through him. What's more—bankruptcy ahead! Don't I know that not a lady in Stepney or Mile End comes here? Don't I know that you depend upon your West End connection? When that goes, where are you? And all for the sake of that pink and white chap! Well, when one goes, the other 'll go too, I suppose. Rent out of profits, indeed! No, no, Miss, it 'll do you good to learn a little business even if you do get sold up.'

'Thank you, Mr. Bunker. Do you know, I do not think you will ever have the pleasure of selling me up?'

She laughed so merrily that he felt he hated her quite as much as he hated his nephew. Why, six months before, no one laughed in Stepney at all; and to think that anyone should laugh at him, would have been an impossible dream.

'You laugh,' he said gravely, 'and yet you are on the brink of ruin. Where's your character? Wrapped up with the character of that young man. Where's your business? Drove away—by him. You laugh. Ah! I'm sorry for you, Miss, because I thought at one time you were a plain-spoken, honest sort of young woman: if I'd ha' known that you meant to use my house—mine—the friend of all the respectable tradesmen—for such wicked fads as now disgrace it, I'd never ha' taken you for a tenant.'

'Oh! yes, you would, Mr. Bunker.' She laughed again, but not merrily this time. 'Oh! yes—you would. You forget the fittings and the furniture, the rent paid in advance, and the half-crown an hour for advice. Is there anything, I should like to know, that you would not do for half-a-crown an hour?'

He made no reply.

'Why, again, do you hate your nephew? What injury has he done you, that you should bear him such ill-will?'

This, which was not altogether a shot in the dark, went straight to Mr. Bunker's heart. He said nothing, but put on his hat and rushed out. Clearly, these two between them would drive him mad.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

PROOFS IN PRINT.

'It is quite finished now,' said Daniel Fagg, blotting the last page.

When he began to live with the dressmakers, Angela, desiring to find him some employment, had suggested that he should re-write the whole of his book, and redraw the illustrations. It was not a large book, even though it was stuffed and padded with readings of inscriptions and tablets. An ordinary writer would have made a fair copy in a fortnight. But so careful an author as Daniel, so anxious to present his work perfect and unassailable, and so slow in the mere mechanical art of writing, wanted much more than a fortnight. His handwriting, like his Hebrew, had been acquired comparatively late in life: it was therefore rather ponderous, and he had never learned the art of writing half a word and leaving the other half to be guessed. Then there were the Hebrew words, which took a great deal of time to get right; and the equilateral triangles, which also caused a considerable amount of trouble. So that it was a good six weeks before Daniel was ready with a fair copy of his manuscript. He was almost as happy in making this transcript as he had been with the original document, perhaps more so, because he was now able to consider his great discovery as a whole, to regard it as an architect may regard his finished work, and to touch up, ornament, and improve his translations.

'It is quite complete,' he repeated, laying the last page in its place and tapping the roll affectionately. 'Here you will find the full account of the two tables of stone and a translation of their contents, with notes. What will they say to that, I wonder?'

'But how,' asked Angela, 'how did the tables of stone get to the British Museum?'

Mr. Fagg considered his reply for a while.

'There are two ways,' he said, 'and I don't know which is the right one. For either they were brought here when we, the descendants of Ephraim, as everybody knows, landed in England, or else they were brought here by Phœnician traders after the Captivity. However, there they are, as anybody may see with the help of my discovery. As for the scholars, how can they see anything? Wilful ignorance, Miss, is their sin: pride and wilful ignorance. You're ignorant, because you are a woman, and it is your nature to. But not to love darkness!'

'No, Mr. Fagg. I lament my ignorance.'

'Then there's the story of David and Jonathan, and the history of Jezebel and her great wickedness, and the life and death of King Jehoshaphat, and a great deal more. Now read for the first time from the arrow-headed character—so called—by Daniel Fagg, self-taught scholar, once shoemaker in the colony of Victoria, Discoverer of the Primitive Alphabet and the Universal Language.'

'That is indeed a glorious thing to be able to say, Mr. Fagg.'

'But now it is written, what next?'

'You mean, how can you get it printed?'

'Of course, that's what I mean,' he replied almost angrily. 'There's the book, and no one will look at it. Haven't I tried all the publishers? What else should I mean?'

The old disappointment, kept under and forgotten during the excitement of rewriting the book, was making itself felt again. How much farther forward was he? The work had been finished long before; all he had done during the last six weeks was to write it afresh.

'I've only been wasting my time here,' he said querulously.

'I ought to have been up and about. I might have gone to Oxford, where, I'm told, there are young men who would perhaps give me a hearing: or there's Cambridge, where they have never heard of my discovery. You've made me waste six weeks and more.'

Angela forbore to ask him how he would have lived during those six weeks. She replied softly:—

'Nay, Mr. Fagg: not wasted the time. You were overworked: you wanted rest. Besides, I think we may find a plan to get this book published.'

'What plan? How?'

'If you would trust the manuscript to my hands—yes; I know well how precious it is, and what a dreadful thing it would be to lose it: but you have a copy, and you can keep that while I take the other.'

'Where are you going to take it?'

'I do not know yet. To one of the publishers, I suppose.'

He groaned.

'I have been to every one of them. Not a publisher in London but has had the offer of my book. They won't have it, any of them. Oh! it's their loss, I know that—but what is it to me?'

'Will you let me try? Will you trust me with the manuscript?'

He reluctantly and jealously allowed her to take away the precious document. When it was out of his hands, he tried to amuse himself with the first copy, but found no pleasure in it at all, because he thought continually of the scorn which had been hurled upon him and his discovery. He saw the heads of departments, one after the other, receiving him politely, and listening to what he had to say: he saw them turning impatient, interrupting him, declining to hear any more, referring him to certain books in which he would find a refutation of his theories, and finally refusing even to see him. Never was discoverer treated with such contempt. Even the attendants at the Museum took their cue from their chiefs, and received his advances with scorn. Should they waste their time—the illiterate—in listening unprofitably to one whom the learned Dr. Birch and the profound Mr. Newton had sent away with contempt? Better sit in the spacious halls, bearing the wand of office, and allowing the eyelids to fall gently, and the mind to wander away among pleasant pastures where there was drink with tobacco. Then there were the people who had subscribed. Some of them were gentlemen connected with Australia: they had tossed him the twelve-and-sixpence in the middle of his talk, as if to get rid of him: some of them had subscribed in pity for his poverty: some persuaded by his importunity. There was not one among them all, he reflected with humiliation, who subscribed because he believed. Stay, there was this ignorant dressmaker: one convert out of all to whom he had explained his Discovery! One—only one! There have been many religious enthusiasts, prophets, preachers, holders of strange doctrines, who have converted women so that they believed them inspired of heaven: yet these men made other converts, whereas he, Fagg, had but this one, and she was not in love with him, because he was old now, and no longer comely. This was a grand outcome of that Australian enthusiasm!

That day Mr. Fagg was disagreeable, considered as a companion. He found fault with the dinner, which was excellent, as usual; he complained that the beer was thick and flat, whereas it sparkled like champagne, and was as clear as a bell; he was cross in the afternoon, and wanted to prevent the child who sat in the drawing-room from practising her music; and he went out for his walk in a dark and gloomy mood.

Angela let him have his querulous way, unrebuked, because she knew the cause of it. He was suffering from that dreadful hopeless anger which falls upon the unappreciated. He was like some poet who brings out volume after volume, yet meets with no admirers and remains obscure: he was like some novelist who has produced a masterpiece—which nobody will read; or like some actor, the foremost of his age—who depletes the house; or like a dramatist from whose acted works the public fly; or like a man who invents something which is to revolutionise things, only people prefer their old way. Good heavens! is it impossible to move this vast inert mass called the world? Why, there are men who can move it at their will, even by a touch of their little finger; and the Unappreciated, with all their efforts, cannot make the slightest impression. This from time to time makes them go mad, and at such periods they are unpleasant persons to meet. They growl at their clubs, they quarrel with their blood relations, they snarl at their wives, they grumble at their servants. Daniel was having such a fit.

It lasted two whole days, and on the second Rebekah took upon herself to lead him aside and reprove him for the sin of ingratitude, because it was very well known to all that the man would have gone to the workhouse but for Miss Kennedy's timely help. She asked him sternly, what he had done to merit that daily bread which was given him without a murmur: and what excuse he could make for his bad temper and his rudeness towards the woman who had done so much for him.

He had no excuse to make, because Rebekah would not have understood the true one. Wherefore, she bade him repent and reform, or he would hear more from her. This threat frightened him, though it could not remove his irritation and depression. But on the third day sunshine and good cheer and hope—new hope and enthusiasm—returned to him.

For Miss Kennedy announced to him, with many smiles, that a publisher had accepted his manuscript, and that it had already been sent to the printers.

'He will publish it for you,' she said, 'at no cost to yourself. He will give you as many copies as you wish to have, for presentation among your friends and among your subscribers—you will like to send copies to your subscribers, will you not?'

He rubbed his hands and laughed aloud.

'That,' he said, 'will prove that I did not eat up the subscriptions.'

'Of course.' Angela smiled, but did not contradict the proposition. 'Of course, Mr. Fagg; and if ever there was any doubt in your own mind about that money, it is now removed, because the book will be in their hands. And all they wanted was the book.'

'Yes—yes. And no one will be able to say . . . you know what—will they?'

'No, no. You will have proofs sent to you——'

'Proofs!' he murmured. 'Proofs in print! Will they send me proofs soon?'

'I believe you will have the whole book set up in a few weeks.'

'Oh! The whole book—my book—set up—in print!'

'Yes; and if I were you, I would send an announcement of the work by the next mail to your Australian friends. Say that your discovery has at length assumed its final shape and is now ripe for publication, after being laid before all the learned societies of London, and that it has been accepted by Messrs. ——, the well-known publishers, and will be issued almost as soon as this announcement reaches Melbourne. Here is a slip that I have prepared for you.'

He took it with glittering eyes and stammering voice. The news seemed too good to be true.

'Now, Mr. Fagg, that this has been settled, there is another thing which I should like to propose for your consideration. Did you ever hear of that great Roman who saved his country in a time of peril and then went back to the plough?'

Daniel shook his head. 'Is there any Hebrew inscription about him?' he asked.

'Not that I know of. What I mean is this. When your volume is out, Mr. Fagg, when you have sent it—triumphantly—to all the learned societies, and all your subscribers, and all the papers and everywhere, including your Australian friends; because the publisher will let you have as many copies as you please; would it not be a graceful thing, and a thing for future historians to remember, that you left England at the moment of your greatest fame, and went back to Australia to take up your old—occupation?'

Daniel had never considered the thing in this light, and showed no enthusiasm at the proposal.

'When your friends in Victoria prophesied fortune and fame, Mr. Fagg, they spoke out of their hopes and their pride in you.

Of course I do not know much about these things—how should I? Yet I am quite certain that it takes a long time for a learned discovery to make way. There are jealousies—you have experienced them—and unwillingness to admit new things—you have met with that too—and reluctance to unlearn old things—why, you have met with that as well.'

'I have,' he said, 'I have.'

'As for granting a pension to a scholar, or a title, or anything of that sort, it is really never done, so that you would have to make your own living if you remained here.'

'I thought that when the book was published people would buy it.'

Angela shook her head.

'Oh! no. That is not the kind of book which is bought. Very few people know anything about inscriptions. Those who do will go to the British Museum and read it there. One copy will do for all.'

Daniel looked perplexed.

'You do not go back empty-handed,' she said. 'You will have a fine story to tell of how the great scholars laughed at your discovery, and how you got about and told people, and they subscribed, and your book was published, and how you sent it to all of them, to show the mistake they had made, and how the English people have got the book now, to confound the scholars, and how your mission is accomplished, and you are home again to live and die among your own people. It will be a glorious return, Mr. Fagg. I envy you the landing at Melbourne, your book under your arm. You will go back to your old township; you will give a lecture in the schoolroom on your stay in England and your reception; and then you will take up your old place again and follow your old calling exactly the same as if you had never left it, but for the honour and reverence which people will pay you.'

Daniel cooed like a dove.

'It may be,' the siren went on, 'that people will pay pilgrimages to see you in your old age. They will come to see the man who discovered the Primitive Alphabet and the Universal Language; they will say, "This is Daniel Fagg, the great Daniel Fagg, whose unaided intellect overset and brought to confusion all the scholars and showed their learning was but vain pretence; who proved the truth of the Scriptures by his reading of tablets and inscriptions, and who returned, when he had finished his task, with the modesty of a great mind to his simple calling!"'

'I will go,' said Daniel, banging the table with his fist. 'I will go as soon as the book is ready.'

CHAPTER XXXV.

'THEN WE'LL KEEP COMPANY.'

AFTER the celebrated Debate on the abolition of the Lords, Dick Coppin found he took, for the moment, a greatly diminished interest in burning political questions. He lost, in fact, confidence in himself, and went about with hanging head. The Sunday evening meetings were held as usual, but the fiery voice of Dick the Radical was silent, and people wondered. This was the effect of his cousin's address upon him: as for the people, it had made them laugh, just as Dick's had made them angry; they came to the hall to get these little emotions, and not for any personal or critical interest in the matter discussed; and this was about all the effect produced by them.

One evening the old Chartist who had taken the chair met Dick at the Club.

'Come out,' he said, 'come out and have a crack while the boys wrangle.'

They walked from Redman's Lane, where the Club stands, to the quiet side pavement of Stepney Green, deserted now, because the respectable people were all in church, and it was too cold for the lounging of the more numerous class of those who cannot call themselves respectable.

The ex-Chartist belonged, like Daniel Fagg, to the shoemaking trade in its humbler lines. The connection between Leather and Socialism, Chartism, Radicalism, Atheism, and other things detrimental to old institutions, has frequently been pointed out and need not be repeated. It is a reflecting trade, and the results of meditation are mainly influenced by the amount of knowledge the meditation begins with. In this respect, the Chartist of thirty years ago had a great advantage over his successors of the present day, for he had read; he knew the works of Owen, of Holyoake, and of Cobbett; he understood something of what he wanted and why he wanted it. The proof of which is, that they have got all they wanted and we still survive. When next the people really make up their minds that they want another set of things, they will probably get them, too.

'Let us talk,' he said. 'I've been thinking a bit about that chap's speech the other night. I wanted an answer to it.'

'Have you got one?'

'It's all true what he said. First of all, it's true. The pinch is just the same whether the Liberals are in or the Tories. Government don't help us. Why should we help them?'

'Is that all your answer?'

'Wait a bit, lad. Don't hurry a man. The chap was right.

We ought to co-operate, and get all he said and a deal more. And once we do begin, mind you, there'll be astonishment. Because you see, Dick, my lad, there's work before us. But we must be educated. We must all be got to see what we can do if we like. That chap's clever, now. Though he looks like a swell.'

'He's got plenty in him; but he'll never be one of us.'

'If we can use him, what does it matter whether he is one of us or not? Come to that, who is "us"? You don't pretend, before me, that you call yourself one of the common workmen, do you? That does for the Club, but between ourselves—— Why, man, you and me, we're leaders; we've got to think for 'em. What I think is—make that chap draw up a plan, if he can, for getting the people to work together. For we've got all the power at last, Dick; we've got all the power. Don't forget, when we old uns are dead and gone, who done it for you.'

He was silent for a moment. Then he went on.

'We've got what we wanted—that's true—and we seem to be no better off. That's true, too. But we *are* better off; because we *feel* that every man has his share in the rule of the nation; that's a grand thing; we are not kept out of our vote; we don't see, as we used to see, our money spent for us without having a say; that's a very grand thing which he doesn't understand; nor you neither, because you are too young. Everything we get which makes us feel our power more is good for us. The chap was right, but he was wrong as well. Don't give up politics, lad.'

'What's the good if nothing comes?'

'There's a chance now for the working man such as he has never had before in all history. You are the lad to take that chance. I've watched you, Dick, since you first began to come to the Club. There's life in you. Lord! I watch the young fellows one after the other: they stamp and froth, but it comes to nothing: you're different: you want to be something better than a bellows —though your speech the other night came pretty nigh to the bellows kind.'

'Well—what is the chance?'

'The House, Dick. The working men will send you there if you can show them that you've got something in you. It isn't froth they want: it's a practical man with knowledge: you go on reading: go on speaking: go on debating: keep it up: get your name known: don't demean yourself: get reported and learn all that there is to learn. Once in the House, Dick, if you are not afraid——'

'I shall not be afraid——'

'Humph! well: we shall see—well: there's your chance. A working man's candidate; one of ourselves: that's the card for you to play. But not so ignorant as your mates—eh? able, if you want, to use the swells' sneerin' talk, so's to call a man a liar without sayin' the words: to make him feel like a fool and a whipped cur with just showin' your white teeth. Learn them ways, Dick. They'll be useful.'

'But if,' said the young man, doubtfully, 'if I am to keep on debating, what subjects shall we take up at the Club?'

'I should go in for practical subjects. Say that the Club is ready to vote for the abolition of the Lords and Church, and reform of the Land Laws, when the time comes, but it hasn't come yet. You haven't got the choice of subjects that we had. Lord! what with Rotten Boroughs and the Black Book of Pensions, and younger sons and favouritism in the service—why, our hands were full.'

'What practical subjects?'

'Why, them as your cousin talked about. There's the wages of the girls; there's food, and fish, and drink; there's high rent; there's a world o' subjects. You go and find out all about them. Give up the rest for a spell and make yourself master of all these questions. If you do, Dick, I believe your fortune is made.'

Dick looked doubtful. It seemed disheartening to be sent back to the paltry matter of wages, prices, and so on, when he was burning to lead in something great. Yet the advice was sound.

'Sometimes I think, Dick,' the old man went on, 'that the working man's best friends would be the swells, if they could be got hold of. They've got nothing to make out of the artisan; they don't run factories nor keep shops; they don't care, bless you, how high his wages are; why should they? They've got their farmers to pay the rent, and their houses, and their money in the funds; what does it matter to them? They're well brought up too, most of them, civil in their manner, and disposed to be friendly if you're neither standoffish nor familiar, but know yourself and talk accordin'.

'If the swells should ever come to us, we ought to go to them. Remember that, Dick. Very soon there will be no more questions of Tory and Liberal, but only what is the best thing for us. You play your game by the newest rules; as for the old ones, they've seen their day.'

Dick left him, but he did not return to the Club. He communed beneath the stars, turning over these and other matters in his mind. Yes, the old man was right; the old indignation times were over; the long lists of crimes which the political agitator could bring against King, Church, Lords, and Commons, thirty, forty, fifty years ago, are useless now; they only serve to amuse an audience not too critical: he was ashamed of what he had himself said about the Lords; such charges are like the oratory of an ex-Minister on the stump, finding no accusation too reckless to be hurled against his enemies.

He was profoundly ambitious. To some men, situated like himself, it might have been a legitimate and sufficient ambition to recover by slow degrees and thrift, and in some trading way, the place in the middle class from which the Coppins had fallen. Not so to Dick Coppin. He cared very little about the former greatness of the Coppins, and the position once occupied by Coppin, the builder, his father, before he went bankrupt. He meant, secretly, something very much greater for himself; he would be a member of Parliament; he would be a working man's member. There have already been half a dozen working men's members in the House; their success has not hitherto been marked, probably because none of them have shown that they know what they want, if indeed they want anything; up to the last few days, Dick simply desired in the abstract to be one of them—only of course a red-hot Radical, an Irreconcilable. Now, however, he desired more; his cousin's words and the Chartist's words fell on fruitful soil; he perceived that to become a power in the House one must be able to inform the House on the wants, the programme of his constituents; what they desire and mean to have. Dick always mentally added that clause, because it belongs to the class of speech in which he had been brought up, 'and we mean to have it.' You accompany the words with a flourish of the left hand, which is found to be more effective than the right for such purposes. They don't really mean to have it—whatever it may be—but with their audiences it is necessary to put on the appearance of strength before there arises any confidence in strength. Disestablishers of all kinds invariably mean to have it, and the phrase is perhaps getting played out.

Dick went home to his lodgings, and sat among his books, thinking. He was a man who read; for the sake of being independent he became a teetotaller, so that, getting good wages, he was rich: he would not marry, because he did not want to be encumbered: he bought such books as he thought would be useful to him, and read them, but no others: he was a man of energy and tenacity, whose chief fault was the entire absence, as yet, of sympathy and imagination. If these could be supplied in any way, Dick Coppin's course would be assured. For with them would come play of fancy, repartee, wit, illustration, and the graces as well as the strength of oratory.

He went on Monday evening to see Miss Kennedy. He would find out from her, as a beginning, all that she could tell him about the wages of women.

'But I have told you,' she said, 'I told you all the first night you came here. Have you forgotten? Then, I suppose I must tell you again.'

The first time he was only bored with the story, because he did not see how he could use it for his own purposes. Therefore, he had forgotten the details.

She told him the sad story of woman's wrongs, which go unredressed while their sisters clamour for female suffrage, and make school boards intolerable by their squabbles. The women do but copy the men; therefore, while the men neglect the things that lie ready to their hand, and hope for things impossible, under new forms of Government, what wonder if the women do the like?

This time Dick listened, because he now understood that a practical use might be made out of the information. He was not a man of highly sensitive organisation, nor did he feel any indignation at the things Angela told him, seeing that he had grown up among these things all his life, and regarded the inequalities of wages and work as part of the bad luck of being born a woman. But he took note of all, and asked shrewd questions, and made suggestions.

'If,' he said, 'there's a hundred women asking for ten places, of course the governor 'll give them to the cheapest.'

'That,' replied Angela, 'is a matter of course as things now are. But there is another way of considering the question. If we had a Woman's Trade Union, as we shall have before long, where there are ten places, only ten women should be allowed to apply, and just wages be demanded!'

'How is that to be done?'

'My friend, you have yet a great deal to learn.'

Dick reddened, and replied rudely, that if he had, he did not expect to learn it from a woman.

'A great deal to learn,' she repeated gently; 'above all, you have got to learn the lesson which your cousin began to teach you the other night—the great lesson of finding out what you want, and then getting it for yourselves. Governments are nothing: you must help yourselves; you must combine.'

He was silent. The girl made him angry, yet he was afraid of her, because no other woman whom he had ever met spoke as she did, or knew so much.

'Combine,' she repeated. 'Preach the doctrine of combination; and teach us the purposes for which we ought to combine.'

The advice was just what the cobbler had given.

'Oh, Mr. Coppin'—her voice was as winning as her eyes were kind and full of interest,—'you are clever, you are persevering; you are brave; you have so splendid a voice; you have such a natural gift of oratory, that you ought to become—you must become—one of the leaders of the people.'

Pride fell prone—like Dagon—before these words. Dick succumbed to the gracious influence of a charming woman.

'Tell me,' he said, reddening, because it is humiliating to seek help of a girl, 'tell me what I am to do.'

'You are ambitious, are you not?'

'Yes,' he replied boldly, 'I am ambitious. I don't tell them outside,' he jerked his thumb over his shoulder to indicate the Advanced Club, 'but I mean to get into the 'Ouse—I mean the House.' One of his little troubles was the correction of certain peculiarities of speech common among his class. It was his cousin who first directed his attention to this point.

'Yes; there is no reason why you should not get into the House,' said Angela. 'But it would be a thousand pities if you should get in yet.'

'Why should I wait, if they will elect me?'

'Because, Mr. Coppin, you must not try to lead the people till you know whither you would lead them; because you must not pretend to represent the people till you have learned their condition and their wants; because you must not presume to offer yourself till you are prepared with a programme.'

'Yet plenty of others do.'

'They do; but what else have they done?'

'Only tell me, then—tell me what to do. Am I to read?'

'No; you have read enough for the present. Rest your eyes from books; open them to the world; see things as they are. Look out of this window. What do you see?'

'Nothing; a row of houses; a street; a road.'

'I see, besides, that the houses are mean, dirty, and void of beauty: but I see more. I see an organ-player; on the kerbstone the little girls are dancing; in the road the ragged boys are playing. Look at the freedom of the girls' limbs; look at the careless grace of the children. Do you know how clever they are? Some of them who sleep where they can, and live as they can, can pick pockets at three, go shop-lifting at four, plot and make conspiracies at five: see how they run and jump and climb.'

'I see them. They are everywhere. How can we help that?'

'You would leave these poor children to the Government and the police. Yet I think a better way to redeem these little ones is for the working men to resolve together that they shall be taken care of, taught, and apprenticed. Spelling, which your cousin says constitutes most of the School Board education, does not so much matter. Take them off the streets and train them to a trade. Do you ever walk about the streets at night? Be your own police, and make your streets clean. Do you ever go into the courts and places where the dock labourers sleep? Have a committee for every one such street or court, and make them decent. When a gang of roughs make the pavement intolerable, you decent men step off and leave them to the policeman, if he dares interfere. Put down the roughs yourselves with a strong hand. Clear out the thieves' dens and the drinking-shops; make rogues and vagabonds go elsewhere. I am always about among the people: they are full of sufferings which need not be; there are a great many workers—ladies, priests, clergymen—among them, trying to remove some of the suffering. But why do you not do this for yourselves? Be your own almoners. I find everywhere, too, courage and honesty, and a desire for better things. Show them how their lot may be alleviated.'

'But I don't know how,' he replied humbly.

'You must find out, if you would be their leader. And you must have sympathy. Never was there yet a leader of the people who did not feel with them as they feel.'

This saying was too hard for the young man, who had, he knew, felt hitherto only for himself.

'You say what Harry says. I sometimes think——' He stopped short as if an idea had suddenly occurred to him. 'Look here, is it true that you and Harry are keeping company.'

'No, we are not,' Angela replied, with a blush.

'Oh, I thought you were. Is it off, then?'

'It never was—more—on—than it is at present, Mr. Coppin.

'Oh!' He looked doubtful. 'Well,' he said, 'I suppose there is no reason why a girl should tell a lie about such a simple thing.' He certainly was a remarkably rude young man. 'Either you are or you ain't. That's it, isn't it? And you ain't?'

'We are not,' said Angela, with a little blush, for the facts of the case were, from one point of view, against her.

'Then, if you are not—I don't care—though it's against my rules, and I did say I would never be bothered with a woman. . . . Look here—you and me will——'

'Will what?'

'Will keep company,' he replied firmly. 'Oh, I know: it's a great chance for you; but then, you see, you ain't like the rest of 'em, and you know things, somehow, that may be useful—though how you learned 'em, nor where you came from, nor what's your character—there—I don't care, we'll keep company!'

'Oh!'

'Yes: we'll begin next Sunday. You'll be useful to me, so that the bargain is not all on one side.' It was not till afterwards that Angela felt the full force of this remark. 'As for getting married, there's no hurry: we'll talk about that when I'm member. Of course, it would be silly to get married now.'

'Of course,' said Angela.

'Let's get well up the tree first. Lord help you! How could I climb, to say nothing o' you, with a round half-dozen o' babies at my heels?'

'But, Mr. Coppin,' she said, putting aside these possibilities, 'I am sorry to say that I cannot possibly keep company with you. There is a reason—I cannot tell you what it is—but you must put that out of your thoughts.'

'Oh!' his face fell, 'if you won't, you won't. Most girls jump at a man who's in good wages and a temperance man, and sought after, like me. But—there—if you won't, there's an end. I'm not going to waste my time cryin' after any girl.'

'We will remain friends, Mr. Coppin?' She held out her hand.

'Friends? what's that? we might ha' been pals—I mean partners.'

'But I can tell you all I think; I can advise you in my poor way still, whenever you please to ask my advice, even if I do not share your greatness. And believe me, Mr. Coppin, that I most earnestly desire to see you not only in the House, but a real leader of the people, such a leader as the world has never yet beheld. To begin with, you will be a man of the very people.'

'Ay!' he said, 'one of themselves!'

'A man not to be led out of his way by flatterers.'

'No,' he said, with a superior smile, 'no one, man or woman, can flatter me.'

'A man who knows the restless unsatisfied yearnings of the people, and what they mean, and has found out how they may be satisfied.'

'Ye—yes!' he replied, doubtfully, 'certainly.'

'A man who will lead the people to get what is good for themselves and by themselves, without the help of Government.'

And no thunders in the Commons? No ringing denunciation of the Hereditary House? Nothing at all that he had looked to do and to say? Call this a leadership? But he thought of the Chartist and his new methods. By different roads, said Montaigne, we arrive at the same end.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

WHAT WILL BE THE END?

The end of the year drew near, the end of that last year of 'eighty-one, which, whatever its shortcomings, its burning heat of July and its wretched rain of August, went out in sweet and gracious sunshine, and a December like unto the April of a poet. For six months Angela had been living among her girls; the place was become homelike to her; the workwomen were now her friends, her trusted friends; the voice of calumny about her antecedents was silent, unless when it was the voice of Bunker; the Palace of Delight, whose meaning was as yet unknown and unsuspected, was rising rapidly, and, indeed, was nearly complete, a shell which had to be filled with things beautiful and delightful, of which Angela did not trust herself to speak. She had a great deal to think of in those last days of the year 'eighty-one. The dressmaking was nothing; that went on: there was some local custom, and more was promised. It seemed as if, on the soundest principles of economy, it would actually pay; there was a very large acquaintance made at odd times among the small streets and mean houses of Stepney: it was necessary to visit these people and to talk with them. Angela had nothing to do with the ordinary channels of charity; she would help neither curate, nor sister of mercy, nor Bible-woman. Why, she said, do not the people stand shoulder to shoulder and help themselves? To be sure, she had the great advantage over the professional visitors that she was herself only a work-woman, and was not paid for any services. And, as if there was not already enough to make her anxious, there was that lover of hers.

Were she and Harry keeping company? Dick Coppin asked this question, and Angela, not altogether truthfully, said that they were not. What else were they doing, indeed? No word of love now; had he not promised to abstain? Yet she knew his past; she knew what he had given up for her sake, believing her only a poor dressmaker—all for love of her—and she could not choose but let her heart go forth to so loyal and true a lover. Many ladies in many tales of chivalry have demanded strange services from their lovers, none so strange as that asked by Angela, when she ordered her lover not only to pretend to be a cabinet-maker and a joiner, but to *work at his trade and to live by it.* Partly in self-reproach, partly in admiration, she watched him going and coming to and from the Brewery, where he now earned, thanks to Lord Jocelyn's intervention, the sum of a whole shilling an hour. For there was nothing in his bearing or his talk to show that he repented his decision; he was always cheerful, always of good courage: more, he was always in attendance upon her. It was he who thought for her, invented plans to make her evenings attractive, brought raw lads—recruits in the army of Culture—from the Advanced Club and elsewhere, and set them an example of good manners, and was her prime minister, her aide-de-camp, her chief vizier.

And the end of it all? Nay; the thing itself being so pleasant, why hasten the end? And if there was to be an end, could it not be connected with the opening of the Palace? Yes, when the Palace was ready to open its gates, then would Angela open her arms. For the moment, it was the sweet twilight of love, the half-hour before the dawn, the sweet uncertainty when all was certainty. And as yet the Palace was only just receiving its roof; the fittings and decorations, the organ, and the statues and all, had still to be put in. When everything was ready, . . . then . . . . then . . . . Angela would somehow, perhaps, find words to bid her lover be happy if she could make him happy.

There could be but one end. Angela came to Whitechapel, incognita, a princess disguised as a milkmaid, partly out of curiosity, partly to try her little experiment for the good of the work-girls, with the gaiety and light heart of youth, thinking that before long she would return to her old place, *just as she had left it.* But she could not: her old views of life were changed; and a man had changed them; more than that, a man whose society, whose strength, whose counsel, had become necessary to her. 'Who,' she asked herself, 'would have thought of the Palace, except—him? Could I—could any woman? I could have given away money; that is all: I could have been robbed and cheated: but such an idea, so grand, so simple—it is a man's, not a woman's. When the Palace is completed, when all is ready for the opening—then——' And then the air became musical with the clang and clash of wedding bells, up the scale, down the scale, in thirds, in fifths, with triple bob-majors, and the shouts of the people, and the triumphant strains of a Wedding March.

How could there be any end but one? seeing that not only did this young man present himself nearly every evening at the drawing-room, when he was recognised as the Director of Ceremonies, or the Leader of the Cotillon, or the Deviser of Sports, from an acted *Proverbe* to a Madrigal, but that, in addition, the custom was firmly established that he and Angela should spend their Sundays together; when it rained they went to church together, and had readings in the drawing-room in the afternoon, with perhaps a little concert in the evening of sacred music, to which some of the girls would come. But if the day was sunny and bright there were many places where they might go, for the East is richer than the West in pretty and accessible country places. They would take the tram along the Mile End Road, past the delightful old church of Bow to Stratford, with its fine Town Hall and its round dozen of churches and chapels—a town of fifty thousand people, and quite a genteel place, whose residents preserve the primitive custom of fetching the dinner beer themselves, from its native public-house, on Sunday after church. At Stratford there are many ways open if you are a good walker, as Angela was. You may take the Woodford Road, and presently turn to the right and find yourself in a grand old forest—only there is not much of it left—called Hainault Forest. When you have crossed the forest you get to Chigwell, and then if you are wise you will take another six miles, as Angela and Harry generally did, and get to Epping, where the toothsome steak may be found, or haply the simple cold beef not to be despised after a fifteen miles walk. And so home by train. Or you may take the northern road at Stratford, and walk through Leytonstone and Woodford, and leaving Epping Forest on the right, walk along the bank of the river Lea till you come to Waltham Abbey, where there is a church to be seen, and a cross, and other marvels. Or you may go still farther afield and take train all the way to Ware, and walk through country roads and pleasant lanes, if you have a map, to stately Hatfield, and on to St. Albans—but do not try to dine there, even if you are only one-and-twenty, and a girl. All these walks, and many more, were taken by Angela, with her companion, on that blessed day which should be spent for the good of body as well as soul. They are walks which are beautiful in the winter as well as in the summer: though the trees are leafless, there is an underwood faintly coloured with its winter tint of purple, and there are stretches of springy turf, and bushes hung with catkins; and, above all, there was nobody in the Forest or on the roads except Angela and Harry. Sometimes the night fell on them when they were yet three or four miles from Epping: then, as they walked in the twilight, the trees on either hand silently glided past them like ghosts, and the mist rose and made things look shadowy and large, and the sense of an endless pilgrimage fell upon them, as if they would always go on like this, side by side; then their hearts would glow within them, and they would talk, and the girl would think it no shame to reveal the secret thoughts of her heart, although the man with her was not her accepted lover.

As for her reputation, where was it? Not gone, indeed, because no one, among her old friends, knew of these walks and this companionship; but in grievous peril.

Or, when the day was cloudy, there was the City. I declare there is no place which contains more delightful walks for a cloudy Sunday forenoon, when the clang of the bells has finished, and the scanty worshippers are in their places, and the sleepy sextons have shut the doors, than the streets and lanes of the old City. You must go, as Harry did, provided with something of ancient lore, otherwise the most beautiful places will quite certainly be thrown away and lost for you. Take that riverside walk from Billingsgate to Blackfriars. Why, here were the quays, the ports, the whole commerce of the City in the good old days. Here was Cold Herbergh, that great many-gabled house where Harry Prince of Wales 'carried on' with Falstaff and his merry crew; here was Queenhithe; here Dowgate-with-Walbrook; here Baynard's Castle, and close by the Tower of Montfichet; also a little to the north a thousand places dear to the antiquary, though they have pulled down so much: there is Tower Royal, where Richard the Second lodged his mother: there is the church of Whittington, close by the place where his college stood: there are the precincts of Paul's and the famous street of Chepe—Do people ever think what things have been done in Chepe? There is Austin Friars with its grand old church, now given to the Dutch, and its quiet City square, where only a few years ago lived Lettice Langton, of whom some of us may have heard; there is the Tower Hill, on which was formerly the residence of one Alderman Medlycott, guardian of Nelly Carellis: and west of Paul's there is the place where once stood the house of Dr. Gregory Shovel, who received the orphan Kitty Pleydell. But, indeed, there is no end to the histories and associations of the City, and a man may give his life profitably to the mastery and mystery of its winding streets.

Here they would wander in the quiet Sunday forenoons, while their footsteps echoed in the deserted streets, and they could walk fearless in the middle of the road, while they talked of the great town and its million dwellers, who come like the birds in the morning and vanish like the birds in the evening.

Or they would cross the river and wander up and down the quaint old town of Rotherhithe, or visit Southwark, the town of hops and malt and all kinds of strange things, or Deptford the Deserted, or even Greenwich; and if it was rainy they would go to church. There are a great many places of worship about Whitechapel, and many forms of creed, from that of the Baptist to that of the man with the Biretta; and it would be difficult to select one which is more confident than another of possessing the real Philosopher's Stone, the thing for which we are always searching, the Whole Truth. And everywhere, church and chapel filled with the well-to-do and the respectable, and a sprinkling of the very poor. But of the working men—none.

'Why have they all given up religion?' asked Angela. 'Why should the working men all over the world feel no need of religion, if it were only the religious emotion?'

Harry, who had answers ready for many questions, could find none for this. He asked his cousin Dick, but he could not tell. Personally, he said, he had something else to do, but if the women wanted to go to church they might, and so long as the parsons and priests did not meddle with him, he should not meddle with them. But these statements hardly seemed an answer to the question. Perhaps in Berlin or in Paris they could explain more clearly how this strange thing has come to pass.

CHAPTER XXXVII

TRUTH WITH FAITHFULNESS.

To possess pure truth—*and to know it*—is a thing which affects people in two ways, both of them uncomfortable to their fellow-creatures. It impels some to go pointing out the purity of truth to the world at large, insisting upon it, dragging unwilling people along the road which leads to it, and dwelling upon the dangers which attend the neglect of so great a chance. Others it affects with a calm and comfortable sense of superiority. The latter was Rebekah's state of mind: to be a Seventh Day Independent was only one degree removed from belonging to the Chosen People, to begin with: and that there is but one chapel in all England where the Truth reposes for a space, as the Ark of the Covenant reposed at Shiloh, 'in curtains,' is, if you please, a thing to be proud of! It brings with it elevation of soul.

There is at present, whatever there may once have been, no proselytising zeal about the Seventh Day Independents: they are, in fact, a torpid body: they are contented with the conviction—a very comforting one, and possessed by other creeds besides their own—that, sooner or later, the whole world will embrace their faith. Perhaps the Jews look forward to a day when, in addition to the Restoration which they profess to desire, all mankind will become proselytes in the Court of the Gentiles: it is something little short of this that the congregation of Seventh Day Independents expect in the dim future. What a splendid, what a magnificent field for glory—call it not vain-glory!—does this conviction present to the humble believer! There are, again, so very few of them, that each one may feel himself a visible pillar of the Catholic

Church, bearing on his shoulders a perceptible and measurable quantity of weight. Each is an Atlas. It is, moreover, pleasing to read the Holy Scriptures, especially the books of the Prophets, as written especially for a Connection which numbers just one chapel in Great Britain and seven in the United States. How grand is the name of Catholic applied to just one church! Catholicity is as yet all to come, and exists only as a germ, or seedling! The Early Christians may have experienced the same delight.

Rebekah, best and most careful of shopwomen and accountants, showed her religious superiority more by the silence of contempt than by zeal for conversion. When Captain Tom Coppin, for instance, was preaching to the girls, she went on with her figures, casting up, ruling in red ink, carrying forward in methodical fashion, as if his words could not possibly have any concern with her: and when a church bell rang, or any words were spoken about other forms of worship, she became suddenly deaf and blind and cold. But she entreated Angela to attend their services. 'We want *everybody* to come,' she said: 'we only ask for a single hearing; come and hear my father preach.'

She believed in the faith of the Seventh Day. As for her father—when a man is paid to advocate the cause of an eccentric or a ridiculous form of belief; when he has to plead that cause week by week to the same slender following, to prop up the limp, and to keep together his small body of believers; when he has to maintain a show of hopefulness, to strengthen the wavering, to confirm the strong, to encourage his sheep in confidence; when he gets too old for anything else, and his daily bread depends upon this creed and no other,—who shall say what, after a while, that man believes or does not believe? Red-hot words fall from his lips, but they fall equally red-hot each week; his arguments are conclusive, but they were equally conclusive last week; his logic is irresistible, his encouragement is warm and glowing; but logic and encouragement alike are those of last week and many weeks ago—surely, surely there is no worse fate possible for any man than to preach, week by week, any form whatever of dogmatic belief, and to live by it; surely nothing can be more deadly than to simulate zeal, to suppress doubt, to pretend certainty. But this is dangerous ground; because others besides Seventh Day Independents may feel that they are upon it, and that beneath them there are quagmires.

'Come,' said Rebekah. 'We want nothing but a fair hearing.'

Their chapel was endowed, which doubtless helped the flock to keep together: it had a hundred and ten pounds a year belonging to it; and a little house for the minister, and there were scanty pew rents, which almost paid for the maintenance of the fabric and the old woman who cleaned the windows and dusted the pews. If the Rev. Percival Armitage gave up that chapel, he would have no means of subsistence at all. Let us not impute motives: no doubt he firmly believed what he taught; but his words, like his creed, were stereotyped; they had long ceased to be persuasive; they now served only to preserve.

If Angela had accepted that invitation for any given day, there would have been, she knew very well, a sermon for the occasion, conceived, written, and argued out expressly for herself. And this she did not want. Therefore she said nothing at all of her intentions, but chose one Saturday when there was little doing, and she could spare a forenoon for her visit.

The chapel of the Seventh Day Independents stands in Redman's Lane, close to the Advanced Club House. It is a structure extremely plain and modest in design. It was built by an architect who entertained humble views—perhaps he was a Churchman—concerning the possible extension of the Connection, because the whole chapel if quite filled would not hold more than two hundred people. The front, or façade, is flat, consisting of a surface of grey brick wall, with a door in the middle and two circular windows, one on each side. Over the door there are two dates—one of erection, the other of restoration. The chapel within is a well-proportioned room, with a neat gallery running round three sides, resting on low pillars and painted a warm and cheerful drab: the pews are painted of the same colour. At the back are two windows with semicircular arches, and between the windows stands a small railed platform with a reading-desk upon it for the minister. Beside it are high seats with cushions for elders, or other ministers if there should be any. But these seats have never been occupied in the memory of man. The pews are ranged in front of the platform, and they are of the old and high-backed kind. It is a wonderful—a truly wonderful thing that clergymen, priests, ministers, padres, rabbis, and church architects, with churchwardens, sidesmen, vergers, bishops and chapel-keepers of all persuasions are agreed, whatever their other differences, in the unalterable conviction that it is impossible to be religious—that is, to attend services in a proper frame of mind—unless one is uncomfortable. Therefore we are offered a choice: we may sit in high-backed, narrow-seated pews, or we may sit on low-backed, narrow-seated benches; but sit in comfort we may not. The Seventh Day people have got the high-backed pew (which catches you in the shoulder-blade, and tries the back-bone, and affects the brain, and causes softening in the long run), and the narrow seat (which drags the muscles and brings on premature paralysis of the lower limbs). The equally narrow, low-backed bench produces injurious effects of a different kind, but similarly pernicious. How would it be to furnish one aisle, at least, of a church with broad, low, and comfortable chairs having arms? They should be reserved for the poor, who have so few easy-chairs of their own: rightly managed and properly advertised, they might help towards a revival of religion among the working classes.

Above the reading platform in this little chapel, they have caused to be painted on the wall the Ten Commandments—the fourth emphasised in red—with a text or two bearing on their distinctive doctrine: and in the corner is a door leading to a little vestry; but, as there are no vestments, its use is not apparent.

As for the position taken by these people, it is perfectly logical, and, in fact, impregnable. There is no answer to it. They say, 'Here is the Fourth Commandment. All the rest you continue to observe. Why not this? When was it repealed? And by whom?' If you put these questions to Bishop or Presbyter, he has no reply. Because that Law never has been repealed. Yet, as the people of the Connection complain, though they have reason and logic on their side, the outside world will not listen, and go on breaking the Commandment with light and unthinking heart. It is a dreadful responsibility—albeit a grand thing—to be in possession of so simple a truth of such vast importance, and yet to get nobody ever to listen. The case is worse even than that of Daniel Fagg.

Angela noted all these things as she entered the little chapel a short time after the service had commenced. It was bewildering to step out of the noisy streets, where the current of Saturday morning was at flood, into this quiet room with its strange service and its strange flock of Nonconformists. The thing, at first, felt like a dream: the people seemed like the ghosts of an unquiet mind.

There were very few worshippers; she counted them all: four elderly men, two elderly women, three young men, two girls, one of whom was Rebekah, and five boys. Sixteen in all. And standing on the platform was their leader.

Rebekah's father, the Rev. Percival Armitage, was a shepherd who from choice led his flock gently, along peaceful meadows and in shady quiet places: he had no prophetic fire: he had evidently long since acquiesced in the certain fact that under him, at least, whatever it might do under others, the Connection would not greatly increase. Perhaps he did not himself desire an increase which would give him more work. Perhaps he never had much enthusiasm By the simple accident of birth he was a Seventh Day Christian: being of a bookish and unambitious turn, and of an indolent habit of body, mentally and physically unfitted for the life of a shop, he entered the ministry: in course of time he got this chapel, where he remained, tolerably satisfied with his lot in life, a simple, self-educated, mildly pious person, equipped with the phrases of his craft, and comforted with the consciousness of superiority and separation. He looked up from his book in a gentle surprise when Angela entered the chapel: it was seldom that a stranger was seen there: once, not long ago, there was a boy who had put his head in at the door and shouted 'Hoo!' and run away again: once there was a drunken sailor who thought it was a public-house, and sat down and began to sing and wouldn't go, and had to be shoved out by the united efforts of the whole small congregation—when he was gone, they sang an extra hymn to restore a religious calm: but never a young lady before. Angela took her seat amid the wondering looks of the people, and the minister went on in a perfunctory way with his prayers and his hymns and his exposition. There certainly did seem to an outsider a want of heart about the service, but that might have been due to the emptiness of the pews. When it came to the sermon, Angela thought the preacher spoke and looked as if the limit of endurance had at last almost arrived, and he would not much longer endure the inexpressible dreariness of the conventicle. It was not so: he was always mildly sad: he seemed always a little bored: it was no use pretending to be eloquent any more: fireworks were thrown away: and as for what he had to say, the congregation always had the same thing, looked for the same thing, and would have risen in revolt at the suggestion of a new thing. His sermon was neither better nor worse than may be heard any day in church or chapel; nor was there anything in it to distinguish it from the sermons of any other body of Christians. The outsider left off listening and began to think of the congregation. In the pew with her was a man of sixty or so, with long black hair streaked with grey, brushed back behind his ears: he was devout, and followed the prayers audibly, and sang the hymns out of a manuscript music-book, and read the text critically: his face was the face of a bull-dog for resolution. The man, she thought, would enjoy going to the stake for his opinions: and if the Seventh Day Independents were to be made the National Established Church, he would secede the week after and make a new sect, if only by himself. Such men are not happy under authority: their freedom of thought is as the breath of their nostrils, and they cannot think like other people. He was not well dressed, and was probably a shoemaker or some such craftsman. In front of her sat a family of three: the wife was attired in a sealskin rich and valuable, and the son, a young man of one or two-and-twenty, had the dress and appearance of a gentleman—that is to say, of what passes for such in common City parlance. What did these people do in such a place? Yet they were evidently of the religion. Then she noticed a widow and her boy: the widow was not young; probably, Angela thought, she had married late in life: her lips were thin and her face was stern. 'The boy,' thought Angela, 'will have the doctrine administered with faithfulness.' Only sixteen altogether: yet all, except the pastor, seemed to be grimly in earnest and inordinately proud of their sect. It was as if the emptiness of their benches and their forsaken condition called upon them to put on a greater show of zeal, and to persuade themselves that the Cause was worth fighting for. The preacher alone seemed to have lost heart. But his people, who were accustomed to him, did not notice this despondency.

Then Angela, while the sermon went slowly on, began to speculate on the conditions of belonging to such a sect. First of all, with the apparent exception of the lady in sealskin and her husband and son, the whole sixteen—perhaps another two or three were prevented from attending—were of quite the lower middle class; they belonged to the great stratum of society whose ignorance is as profound as their arguments are loud. But the uncomfortableness of it! They can do no work on the Saturday —'neither their manservant nor their maidservant,'—their shops are closed and their tools put aside. They lose a sixth part of the working time. The followers of this creed are as much separated from their fellows as the Jews. On the Sunday they may work if they please, but on that day all the world is at church or at play. Angela looked round again. Yes: the whole sixteen had upon their faces the look of pride; they were proud of being separated; it was a distinction, just as it is to be a Samaritan. Who would not be one of the recipients, however few they be in number, of Truth? And what a grand thing, what an inspiriting thing it is to feel that some day or other, perhaps not to-day nor to-morrow, nor in one's lifetime at all, the whole world will rally round the poor little obscure banner, and shout altogether, with voice of thunder, the battle-cry which now sounds no louder than a puny whistle-pipe! Yet, on the whole, Angela felt it must be an uncomfortable creed; better to be one of the undistinguished crowd which flocks to the parish church and yearns not for any distinctions at all. Then the sermon ended and they sang another hymn—the collection in use was a volume printed in New York and compiled by the Committee of the Connection, so that there were, manifestly, congregations on the other side of the Atlantic living in the same discomfort of separation.

At the departure of the people Rebekah hurried out first and waited in the doorway to greet Angela.

'I knew you would come some day,' she said, 'but oh! I wish you had told me when you were coming, so that father might have given one of his doctrine sermons. What we had to-day was only one of the comfortable discourses to the professed members of the church which we all love so much. I am so sorry. Oh! he would convince you in ten minutes.'

'But, Rebekah,' said Angela, 'I should be sorry to have seen your service otherwise than is usual. Tell me, does the congregation of to-day represent all your strength?'

Rebekah coloured. She could not deny that they were, numerically, a feeble folk. 'We rely,' she said, 'on the strength of our cause; and some day—oh! some day—the world will rally round us. See, Miss Kennedy, here is father; when he has said good-bye to the people'—he was talking to the lady in sealskin—'he will come and speak to us.'

'I suppose,' said Angela, 'that this lady is a member of your chapel?'

'Yes,' Rebekah whispered; 'oh! they are quite rich people—

the only rich people we have. They live at Leytonstone; they made their money in the bookbinding, and are consistent Christians. Father'—for at this point Mr. Armitage left his rich followers in the porch,—'this is Miss Kennedy of whom you have heard so much.'

Mr. Armitage took her hand with a weary smile, and asked Rebekah if Miss Kennedy would come home with her.

They lived in a small house next door to the chapel. It was so small that there was but one sitting room, and this was filled with books.

'Father likes to sit here,' said Rebekah, 'by himself all day. He is quite happy if he is let alone. Sometimes, however, he has to go to Leytonstone.'

'To the rich people?'

'Yes.' Rebekah looked troubled. 'A minister must visit his flock, you know; and if they were to leave us it would be bad for us, because the endowment is only a hundred and ten pounds a year, and out of that the church and the house have got to be kept in repair. However, a clergyman must not be dictated to, and I tell father he should go his own way and preach his own sermons. Whatever people say, Truth must not be hidden away as if we were ashamed of it. Hush! here he is.'

The good man welcomed Angela, and said some simple words of gratitude about her reception of his daughter. He had a good face, but he wore an anxious expression, as if something was always on his mind. And he sighed when he sat down at his table.

Angela stayed for half an hour, but the minister said nothing more to her, only when she rose to go he murmured with another heavy sigh, 'There's an afternoon service at three.'

It is quite impossible to say whether he intended this announcement as an invitation to Angela, or whether it was a complaint, wrung from a heavy heart, of a trouble almost intolerable.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

I AM THE DRESSMAKER.

It happened on this very same Saturday that Lord Jocelyn, feeling a little low, and craving for speech with his ward, resolved that he would pay a personal visit to him in his own den, where, no doubt, he would find him girt with a fair white apron and crowned with brown paper, proudly standing among a lot of his brother workmen—glorious fellows!—and up to his knees in shavings.

It is easy to take a cab and tell the driver to go to the Mile End Road; had Lord Jocelyn taken more prudent counsel with himself, he would have bidden him drive straight to Messenger's

Brewery; but he got down where the Whitechapel Road ends and the Mile End Road begins, thinking that he would find his way to the Brewery with the greatest ease. First, however, he asked the way of a lady with a basket on her arm; it was, in fact, Mrs. Bormalack going a-marketing, and anxious about the price of greens; and he received a reply so minute, exact, and bewildering, that he felt, as he plunged into the labyrinthine streets of Stepney, like one who dives into the dark and devious ways of the catacombs.

First of all, of course, he lost himself; but as the place was strange to him, and a strange place is always curious, he walked along in great contentment. Nothing remarkable in the streets and houses, unless, perhaps, the entire absence of anything to denote inequality of wealth and position; so that, he thought with satisfaction, the happy residents in Stepney all receive the same salaries and make the same income, contribute the same amount to the tax collectors and pay the same rent. A beautiful continuity of sameness; a divine monotony realising partially the dreams of the socialist. Presently he came upon a great building which seemed rapidly approaching completion; not a beautiful building, but solid, big, well proportioned, and constructed of real red brick, and without the 'Queen Anne' conceits which mostly go with that material. It was so large and so well built that it was evidently intended for some special purpose; a purpose of magnitude and responsibility, requiring capital: not a factory, because the windows were large and evidently belonged to great halls, and there were none of the little windows in rows which factories must have in the nature of things: not a prison, because prisons are parsimonious to a fault in the matter of external windows; nor a school—yet it might be a school; then—how should so great a school be built in Stepney? It might be a superior almshouse, or a union—yet this could hardly be. While Lord Jocelyn looked at the building, a working man lounged along, presumably an out-of-work working man, with his hands in his pockets and kicking stray stones in the road, which is a sign of the penniless pocket, because he who yet can boast the splendid shilling does not slouch as he goes, or kick stones in the road, but holds his head erect and anticipates with pleasure six half-pints in the immediate future. Lord Jocelyn asked that industrious idle, or idle industrious, if he knew the object of the building. The man replied that he did not know the object of the building; and to make it quite manifest that he really did not know, he put an adjective before the word 'object,' and another—that is, the same—before the word 'building.' With that he passed upon his way, and Lord Jocelyn was left marvelling at the slender resources of our language which makes one adjective do duty for so many qualifications. Presently he came suddenly upon Stepney Church, which is a landmark or initial point, like the man on the chair in the maze of Hampton Court. Here he again asked his way, and then, after finding it and losing it again about six times more, and being generally treated with contumely for not knowing so simple a thing, he found himself actually at the gates of the Brewery, which he might have reached in five minutes had he gone the shortest way.

'So,' he said, 'this is the property of that remarkably beautiful girl, Miss Messenger; who could wish to start better? She is young; she is charming; she is queenly; she is fabulously rich; she is clever; she is—ah! if only Harry had met her before he became an ass!'

He passed the gate and entered the courtyard, at one side of which he saw a door on which was painted the word 'Office.' The Brewery was conservative; what was now a hive of clerks and writers was known by the same name and stood upon the same spot as the little room built by itself in the open court in which King Messenger I., the inventor of the Entire, had transacted by himself, having no clerks at all, the whole business of the infant Brewery for his great invention. Lord Jocelyn pushed open the door and stood irresolute: looking about him, a clerk advanced and asked his business. Lord Jocelyn was the most polite and considerate of men: he took off his hat humbly, bowed, and presented his card.

'I am most sorry to give trouble,' he said; 'I came to see——'

'Certainly, my lord.' The clerk, having been introduced to Lord Davenant, was no longer afraid of tackling a title, however grand, and would have been pleased to show his familiarity with the Great even to a Royal Highness. 'Certainly, my lord; if your lordship will be so good as to write your lordship's name in the visitors' book, a guide shall take your lordship round the Brewery immediately.'

'Thank you, I do not wish to see the Brewery,' said the visitor. 'I came to see a—a—a young man who, I believe, works in this establishment: his name is Goslett.'

'Oh!' replied the clerk, taken aback, 'Goslett! can any one,' he asked generally of the room which he had just left, 'tell me whether there's a man working here named Goslett?'

Josephus—for it was the juniors' room—knew and indicated the place and the man.

'If, my lord,' said the clerk, loth to separate himself from nobility, 'your lordship will be good enough to follow me, I can take your lordship to the man your lordship wants. Quite a common man, my lord—quite. A joiner and carpenter. But if your lordship wants to see him——'

He led Lord Jocelyn across the court, and left him at the door of Harry's workshop.

It was not a great room with benches, and piles of shavings, and a number of men. Not at all: there were racks with tools, a bench, and a lathe: there were pieces of furniture about waiting repair, there was an unfinished cabinet with delicate carved work, which Lord Jocelyn recognised at once as the handiwork of his boy; and the boy himself stood in the room, his coat off and his cuffs turned up, contemplating the cabinet. It is one of the privileges of the trade, that it allows—nay, requires—a good deal of contemplation. Presently Harry turned his head and saw his guardian standing in the doorway. He greeted him cheerfully and led him into the room, where he found a chair with four legs, and begged him to sit down and talk.

'You like it, Harry?'

Harry laughed. 'Why not?' he said. 'You see, I am independent, practically. They pay me pretty well according to the work that comes in. Plain work, you see—joiner's work.'

'Yes, yes, I see. But how long, my boy—how long?'

'Well, sir, I cannot say. Why not all my life?'

Lord Jocelyn groaned.

'I admit,' said Harry, 'that if things were different I should have gone back to you long ago. But now I cannot, unless——'

'Unless what?'

'Unless the girl who keeps me here goes away herself or bids me go.'

'Then you are really engaged to the dress—I mean, the young lady?'

'No, I am not. Nor has she shown the least sign of accepting me. Yet I am her devoted and humble servant.'

'Is she a witch—this woman? Good heavens, Harry! Can you, who have associated with the most beautiful and best-bred women in the world, be so infatuated about a dressmaker?'

'It is strange, is it not? But it is true. The thought of her fills my mind day and night. I see her constantly. There is never one word of love but she knows already, without that word.'

'Strange indeed!' repeated Lord Jocelyn, 'but it will pass You will awake, and find yourself again in your right mind Harry.'

He shook his head.

'From this madness,' he said, 'I shall never recover. For it is my life, whatever happens, I am her servant.'

'It is incomprehensible,' replied his guardian. 'You were always chivalrous in your ideas of women. They are unusual in young men of the present day, but they used to sit well upon you. Then, however, your ideal was a lady.'

'It is a lady still,' said the lover, 'and yet a dressmaker. How this can be I do not know; but it is. In the old days men became the servants of ladies. I know, now, what a good custom it was, and how salutary to the men. Petit Jehan de Saintré in his early days had the best of all possible training.'

'But if Petit Jehan had lived at Stepney——'

'Then there is another thing. The life here is useful.'

'You now tinker chairs and get paid a shilling an hour

Formerly you made dainty carved work-boxes, and fans, and pretty things for ladies, and got paid by their thanks. Which is the more useful life?'

'It is not the work I am thinking of. It is the . . . do you remember what I said the last time I saw you?'

'Perfectly. About your fellow-creatures, was it not? My dear Harry, it seems to me as if our fellow-men get on very well in their own way, without our interference.'

'Yes: that is to say—no: they are all getting on as badly as possible. And somehow I want, before I go away, to find out what it is they want—they don't know—and how they should set about getting it, if it is to be got, as I think it is. You will not think me a prig, sir?'

'You will never be a prig, Harry, under any circumstances. Does, then, the lady of your worship approve of this—this study of humanity?'

'Perfectly. If this lady did not approve of it, I should not be engaged upon it.'

'Harry, will you take me to see this goddess of Stepney Green? It is there, I believe, that she resides?'

'Yes, I would rather not—yet.' The young man hesitated for a moment. 'Miss Kennedy thinks I have always been a working man. I would not undeceive her yet. I would rather she did not know that I have given up—for her sake—such a man as you, and such companionship as yours.'

He held out both his hands to his guardian, and his eyes for a moment were dim. Lord Jocelyn made no reply for a moment. Then he cleared his throat and said he must go, and asked Harry rather piteously if he could do nothing for him at all, and made slowly for the door. The clerk who had received the distinguished visitor was standing at the door of the office waiting for another glimpse of the noble and illustrious personage. Presently he came back and reported that his lordship had crossed the yard on the arm of the young man called Goslett, and that on parting with him he had shaken him by the hand and called him 'my boy.' Whereat many marvelled, and the thing was a stumbling-block, but Josephus said it was not at all unusual for members of his family to be singled out by the Great for high positions of trust, that his own father had been churchwarden of Stepney, and he was a far-off cousin of Miss Messenger's, and that he could himself have been by this time superintendent of his Sunday school if it had not been for his misfortunes. Presently the thing was told to the Chief Accountant, who told it to the Chief Brewer; and if there had been a Chief Baker, one knows not what would have happened.

Lord Jocelyn walked slowly away in the direction of Stepney Green. She lived there, did she? Oh! and her name was Miss Kennedy. Ah! and a man by calling upon her might see her. Very good. He would call. He would say that he was the guardian of Harry, and that he took a warm interest in him, and that the boy was pining away (which was not true), and that he called to know if Miss Kennedy, as a friend, could divine the cause (which was crafty). Quite a little domestic drama he made up in his own mind, which would have done beautifully had it not been completely shattered by the surprising things which happened, as will immediately be seen.

Presently he arrived at Stepney Green, and stopped to look about him. A quiet, George-the-Third-looking place, with many good and solid houses, and a narrow strip of garden running down the middle. In which of these houses did Miss Kennedy dwell?

There came along the asphalte walk an old, old man; he was feeble, and tottered as he went; he wore a black silk stock and a buttoned-up frock-coat; his face was wrinkled and creased. It was, in fact, Mr. Maliphant going, rather late, because he had fallen asleep by the fire, to protect the property. Lord Jocelyn asked him politely if he would tell him where Miss Kennedy lived.

The patriarch looked up, laughed joyously, and shook his head. Then he said something, inaudibly, but his lips moved. And then, pointing to a large house on the right, he said aloud,—

'Caroline Coppin's house it was. She that married Sergeant Goslett. Mr. Messenger, whose grandmother was a Coppin and a good old Whitechapel family, had the deeds. My memory is not so good as usual this morning, young man, or I could tell you who had the house before Caroline's father. But I think it was old Mr. Messenger, because the young man who died the other day, and was only a year or two older than I, was born here himself.' Then he went on his way laughing and wagging his head.

'That is a wonderful old man,' said Lord Jocelyn. 'Caroline Coppin's house: that is Harry's mother's house. Pity she couldn't keep it for her son. The Sergeant was a thrifty man, too. Here is another native. Let us try him.'

This time it was Daniel Fagg, and in one of his despondent moods, because none of the promised proofs had arrived.

'Can you tell me, sir,' asked Lord Jocelyn, 'where Miss Kennedy lives?'

The 'native,' who had sandy hair and a grey beard and immense sandy eyebrows, turned upon him fiercely, shaking a long finger in his face as if it was a sword.

'Mind you,' he growled, 'Miss Kennedy's the only man among you. Talk of your scholars! Gar! Jealousy and envy! But I've remembered her. Posterity shall know her when the head of the Egyptian department is dead and forgotten.

'Thank you,' said Lord Jocelyn, as the man left him. 'I am likely to be forwarded at this rate.'

He tried again.

This time it happened to be none other than Mr. Bunker, The events of the last few weeks were preying upon his mind. He thought continually of handcuffs and prisons; he was nervous and agitated.

But he replied courteously, and pointed out the house.

'Ah!' said Lord Jocelyn, 'that is the house which an old man whom I have just asked said was Caroline Coppin's.'

'Old man? What old man?' Mr. Bunker turned pale. It seemed as if the atmosphere itself was full of dangers. ''Ouse was whose? That 'ouse, sir, is mine—mine, do you hear?'

Lord Jocelyn described the old man. In fact, he was yet within sight.

'I know him,' said Mr. Bunker. 'He's mad, that old man—silly with age. Nobody minds him. That 'ouse, sir, is mine.'

'Oh! and you'—for Lord Jocelyn now recollected him—'are Mr. Bunker, are you? Do you not remember me? Think, man.'

Mr. Bunker thought his hardest; but if you do not remember a man, you might as well stand on your head as begin to think.

'Twenty years ago,' said Lord Jocelyn, 'I took away your nephew, who has now come back here.'

'You did—you did,' cried Bunker, eagerly. 'Ah! sir, why did you let him come back here? A bad business, a bad business!'

'I came to see him to-day, perhaps to ask him why he stays here.'

'Take him away again, sir. Don't let him stay. Rocks ahead, sir!' Mr. Bunker put up his hands in warning. 'When I see youth going to capsize on virtue, it makes my blood, as a Christian man, to curdle. Take him away.'

'Certainly. It does you great credit, Mr. Bunker, as a Christian man, because curdled blood must be unpleasant. But—what rocks?'

'A rock. One rock, a woman. In that 'ouse, sir, she lives. Her name is Miss Kennedy. That is what she calls herself. She's a dressmaker by trade, she says, and a captivator of foolish young men by nature. Don't go anigh her. She may captivate you. Daniel Fagg made her an offer of marriage, and he's sixty. He confessed it to me. She tried it on with me, but a man of principles is proof. The conjurer wanted to marry her. My nephew, Dick Coppin, is a fool about her.'

'She must be a very remarkable woman,' said Lord Jocelyn.

'As for that boy, Harry Goslett'—Bunker uttered the name with an obvious effort—'he's farther gone than all the rest put together. If it wasn't for her, he would go back to where he came from.'

'Ah! and where is that?'

'Don't you know, then? You, the man who took him away? Don't you know where he came from? Was it something very bad?'

There was a look of eager malignity about the man's face; he wanted to hear something bad about his nephew.

Lord Jocelyn encouraged him.

'Perhaps I know, perhaps I do not.'

'A disgraceful story, no doubt,' said Bunker, with a pleased smile. 'I dreaded the worst when I saw him with his white hands and his sneerin' fleerin' ways. I thought of Newgate and gaol-birds; I did indeed, at once. Oh, prophetic soul! Well, now we know the worst; and you had better take him away before all the world knows it. I shan't talk, of course.'

'Thank you, Mr. Bunker. And about this Miss Kennedy—is there anything against her, except that the men fall in love with her?'

'There is plenty against her that would astonish you. But I'm not the man to take away a woman's character. If all secrets were known we should find what a viper we've been cherishing. At the end of her year out she goes of my 'ouse. Bag and baggage, she goes. And wherever she goes that boy 'll go after her, unless you prevent it.'

'Thank you again, Mr. Bunker. Good morning.'

Angela, just returned from her chapel, was sitting at the window of the workroom in her usual place. She looked out upon the green now and again. Presently she saw Mr. Maliphant creep slowly along the pavement, and observed that he stopped and spoke to a gentleman: then she saw Daniel Fagg swinging his arms and gesticulating as he rehearsed to himself the story of his wrongs, and he stopped and spoke to the same man; then she saw Mr. Bunker walking moodily on his way: and he stopped too, and conversed with the stranger. Then he turned, and she saw his face. It was Lord Jocelyn Le Breton, and he was walking with intention towards her own door.

She divined the truth in a moment. He was coming to see 'the dressmaker' who had bewitched his boy.

She whispered to Nelly that a gentleman was coming to see her who must be shown upstairs; she took refuge in the drawing-room, which was happily empty, and she awaited him with a beating heart.

She heard his footsteps on the stairs. The door opened. She rose to meet him.

'You here, Miss Messenger? This is indeed a surprise.'

'No, Lord Jocelyn,' she replied, confused, yet trying to speak confidently. 'In this house, if you please, I am not Miss Messenger; I am Miss Kennedy, the—the——' Now she remembered exactly what her next words would mean to him, and she blushed violently. 'I am—the—the dressmaker.'

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THRICE HAPPY BOY.

A MAN of the world at forty-five seldom feels surprised at anything, unless indeed, like Molière, he encounters virtue in unexpected quarters. This, however, was a thing so extraordinary that Lord Jocelyn gasped.

'Pardon me, Miss Messenger,' he said, recovering himself, 'I was so totally unprepared for this—this discovery.'

'Now that you have made it, Lord Jocelyn, may I ask you most earnestly to reveal it to no one? I mean, *no one at all.*'

'I understand perfectly. Yes, Miss Messenger, I will keep your secret, since it is a secret. I will tell it to *none.* But I would ask a favour in return, if I may.'

'What is that?'

'Take me further into your confidence. Let me know why you have done this most wonderful thing. I hope I am not impertinent in asking this of you.'

'Not impertinent, certainly. And the thing must seem strange to you. And after what you told me some time ago about—' she hesitated a moment, and then turned her clear brown eyes straight upon his face—'about your ward, perhaps some explanation is due to you.'

'Thank you beforehand.'

'First, however, call me Miss Kennedy here; pray—pray do not forget that there is no Miss Messenger nearer than Portman Square.'

'I will try to remember.'

'I came here,' she went on, 'last July, having a certain purpose and a certain problem in my mind. I have remained here ever since, working at that problem. It is not nearly worked out yet, nor do I think that in the longest life it could be worked out. It is a most wonderful problem. For one thing leads to another, and great schemes rise out of small, and there are hundreds of plans springing out of one—if I could only carry them out.'

'To assist you in carrying them out, you have secured the services of my ward, I learn.'

'Yes; he has been very good to me.'

'I have never,' said Lord Jocelyn, 'been greatly tempted in the direction of philanthropy. But pray go on.'

'The first thing I came to establish was an association of dressmakers, myself being one. That is very simple. I have started them with a house free of rent, and the necessary furniture—which I know is wrong, because it introduces an unfair advantage—and we divide all the money in certain proportions. That is one thing.'

'But, my dear young lady, could you not have done this from Portman Square?'

'I could, but not so well. To live here as a workwoman among other workwomen is, at least, to avoid the danger of being flattered, deceived, and paid court to. I was a most insignificant person when I came. I am now so far advanced that a great many employers of women's labour cordially detest me, and would like to see my association ruined.'

'Oh! Lord Jocelyn!' she went on, after a pause, 'you do not know, you cannot know, the dreadful dangers which a rich woman has to encounter. If I had come here in my own name, I should have been besieged by every plausible rogue who could catch my ear for half an hour. I should have had all the clergy round me imploring help for their schools and their churches; I should have had every unmarried curate making love to me; I should have paid ten times as much as anybody else; and, worse than all, I should not have made a single friend. My sympathies, whenever I read the parable, are always with Dives, because he must have been so flattered and worshipped before his pride became intolerable.'

'I see. All this you escaped by your assumption of the false name.'

'Yes. I am one of themselves, one of the people; I have got my girls together: I have made them understand my project: they have become my fast and faithful friends: the better to inspire confidence, I even sheltered myself behind myself: I said Miss Messenger was interested in our success: she sends us orders: I went to the West End with things made up for her. Thanks, mainly to her, we are flourishing: we work for shorter hours and for greater pay than other girls: I could already double my staff if I could only, which I shall soon, double the work. We have recreation, too, and we dine together, and in the evening we have singing and dancing. My girls have never before known any happiness; now they have learned the happiness of quiet, at least, with a little of the culture, and some of the things which make rich people happy. Oh! would you have me go away and leave them, when I have taught them things of which they never dreamed before? Should I send them back to the squalid house and the bare pittance again? Stay and take your luncheon with us when we dine, and ask yourself whether it would not be better for me to live here altogether—never to go back to the West End at all—than to go away and desert my girls?'

She was agitated because she spoke from her heart. She went on without waiting for any reply:—

'If you knew the joyless lives, the hopeless days of these girls, if you could see their workrooms, if you knew what is meant by their long hours and their insufficient food, you would not wonder at my staying here; you would cry shame upon the rich woman so selfish as to spend her substance in idle follies when she might have spent it upon her unfortunate sisters.'

'I think,' said Lord Jocelyn, 'that you are a very noble girl.'

'Then there is another scheme of mine; a project so great and generous—nay, I am not singing my own praises, believe me—that I can never get it out of my mind. This project, Lord Jocelyn, is due to your ward.'

'Harry was a ways an ingenious youth. But pray tell me what it is.'

'I cannot,' she replied; 'when I put the project into words, they seem cold and feeble. They do not express the greatness of it. They would not rouse your enthusiasm. I could not make you understand in any degree the great hopes I have of this enterprise.'

'And it is Harry's invention?'

'Yes—his. All I have done has been to find the money to carry it out.'

'That is a good part of any enterprise, however.'

At this point a bell rang.

'That is the first bell,' said Angela. 'Now they lay down their work and scamper about—at least the younger ones do—for ten minutes before dinner. Come with me to the dining-room.'

Presently the girls came trooping in, fifteen or so, with bright eyes and healthy cheeks. Some of them were pretty; one, Lord Jocelyn thought, of a peculiarly graceful and delicate type, though too fragile in appearance: this was Nelly Sorensen. She looked more fragile than usual to-day, and there were black lines under her lustrous eyes. Another, whom Miss Kennedy called Rebekah, was good-looking in a different way, being sturdy, rosy-cheeked, and downright in her manner. Another, who would otherwise have been quite common in appearance, was made beautiful—almost—by the patient look which had followed years of suffering; she was a cripple: all their faces during the last few months had changed for the better: not one among them all bore the expression which is described by the significant words 'bold' and 'common.' Six months of daily drill and practice in good manners had abolished that look at any rate.

The dinner was perfectly plain and simple, consisting of a piece of meat with plenty of vegetables and bread, and nothing else at all. But the meat was good and well cooked, and the service was on fair white linen. Moreover, Lord Jocelyn, sitting down in this strange company, observed that the girls behaved with great propriety. Soon after they began, the door opened and a man came in. It was one of those to whom Lord Jocelyn had spoken on the green, the man with the bushy sandy eyebrows. He took a seat at the table and began to eat his food ravenously. Once he pushed his plate away as if in a temper, and looked up as if he was going to complain. Then the girl they called Rebekah—she came to dinner on Saturdays, so as to have the same advantages as the rest, though she did no work on that day—held up a forefinger and shook it at him, and he relapsed into silence. He was the only one who behaved badly, and Miss Kennedy made as if she had not seen.

During the dinner the girls talked freely among themselves without any of the giggling and whispering which in some circles is considered good manners; they all treated Miss Kennedy with great respect, though she was only one workwoman among the rest. Yet there was a great difference, and the girls knew it; next to her on her left sat the pretty girl whom she called Nelly.

When dinner was over, because it was Saturday there was no more work. Some of the girls went into the drawing-room to rest for an hour and read: Rebekah went home again to attend the afternoon service: some went into the garden, although it was December, and began to play lawn tennis on the asphalte; the man with the eyebrows got up and glared moodily around from under those shaggy eyebrows, and then vanished. Angela and Lord Jocelyn remained alone.

'You have seen us,' she said; 'what do you think of us?'

'I have nothing to say. And I do not know what to think.'

'Your ward is our right hand. We women want a man to work for us always. It is his business, and his pleasure too, to help us amuse ourselves. He finds diversions; he invents all kinds of things for us. Just now he is arranging tableaux and plays for Christmas.'

'Is it—is it—oh! Miss—Kennedy—is it for the girls only?'

'That is dangerous ground,' she replied, but not severely. 'Do you think we had better discuss the subject from that point of view?'

'Poor boy!' said Lord Jocelyn. 'It is the point of view from which I must regard it.'

She blushed again, and her beautiful eyes grew limpid.

'Do you think,' she said, speaking low—'do you think I do not feel for him? Yet there is a cause—a sentiment perhaps. The time is not quite come. Lord Jocelyn, be patient with me!'

'You will take pity on him?'

'Oh!'—she took the hand he offered her. 'If I can make him happy——'

'If not,' replied Lord Jocelyn, kissing her hand, 'he would be the most ungrateful dog in all the world. If not, he deserves to get nothing but a shilling an hour for the miserable balance of his days. A shilling? No: let him go back to his tenpence. My dear young lady, you have made me, at all events, the happiest of men! No, do not fear: neither by word nor look shall Harry—shall any one—know what you have been so very, very good, so generous, and so thoughtful as to tell me.'

'He loves me for myself,' she murmured. 'He does not know that I am rich. Think of that, and think of the terrible suspicions which grow up in every rich woman's heart when a man makes love to her. Now I can never, never doubt his honesty. For my sake he has given up so much; for my sake—mine—oh! why are men so good to women?'

'No,' said Lord Jocelyn. 'Ask what men can ever do that they should be rewarded with the love and trust of such a woman as you!'

That is indeed a difficult question, seeing in what words the virtuous woman has been described by one who writes as if he ought to have known. As a pendant to the picture 'tis pity, 'tis great pity, that we have not the Eulogy of the Virtuous Man. But there never were any, perhaps.

Lord Jocelyn stayed with Angela all the afternoon. They talked of many things: of Harry's boyhood; of his gentle and ready ways; of his many good qualities; and of Angela herself, her hopes and ambitions; and of their life at Bormalack's. And Angela told Lord Jocelyn about her *protégés*, the claimants to the Davenant peerage, with the history of the 'Roag in Grain,' Saturday Davenant; and Lord Jocelyn promised to call upon them.

It was five o'clock when she sent him away, with permission to come again. Now this, Lord Jocelyn felt, as he came away, was the most satisfactory, nay, the most delightful day he had ever spent.

That lucky rascal, Harry! To think of this tremendous stroke of fortune! To fall in love with the richest heiress in England: to have that passion returned: to be about to marry the most charming, the most beautiful, the sweetest woman that had ever been made! Happy, thrice happy boy! What wonder, now, that he found tinkering chairs, in company, so to speak, with that incomparable woman, better than the soft divans of his club or the dinners and dances of society? What had he, Lord Jocelyn, to offer the lad, in comparison with the delights of this strange and charming courtship?

CHAPTER XL.

SWEET NELLY.

In every love story there is always, though it is not always told, a secondary plot, the history of the man or woman who might have been left happy but for the wedding bells which peal for somebody else and end the tale. When these ring out, the hopes and dreams of some one else, for whom they do not ring, turn at last to dust and ashes. We are drawing near the church, we shall soon hear those bells. Let us spare a moment to speak of this tale untold, this dream of the morning doomed to disappointment.

It is only the dream of a foolish girl: she was young and ignorant: she was brought up in a school of hardship until the time when a gracious lady came to rescue her. She had experienced, outside the haven of rest where her father was safely sheltered, only the buffets of a hard and cruel world, filled with greedy taskmasters who exacted the uttermost farthing in work, and paid the humblest farthing for reward. More than this, she knew, and her father knew, that when his time came for exchanging that haven for the cemetery, she would have to fight the hard battle alone, being almost a friendless girl, too shrinking and timid to stand up for herself. Therefore, after her rescue, at first she was in the Seventh Heaven; nor did her gratitude and love towards her rescuer ever know any abatement. But there came a time when gratitude was called upon to contend with another feeling.

From the very first Harry's carriage towards Nelly was marked by sympathetic interest and brotherly affection. He really regarded this pretty creature, with her soft and winning ways, as a girl whom he could call by her Christian name, and treat as one treats a sweet and charming child. She was clever at learning—nobody, not even Miss Kennedy, danced better: she was docile: she was sweet-tempered, and slow to say or think evil. She possessed naturally, Harry thought—but then he forgot that her father had commanded an East Indiaman—a refinement of thought and manner far above the other girls; she caught readily the tone of her patron; she became in a few weeks, this young dressmaker, the faithful *effigies* of a lady under the instruction of Miss Kennedy, whom she watched and studied day by day. It was unfortunate that Harry continued to treat her as a child, because she was already a woman.

Presently she began to think of him, to watch for him, to note his manner towards herself.

Then she began to compare and to watch his manner towards Miss Kennedy.

Then she began to wonder if he was paying attention to Miss Kennedy, if they were engaged, if they had an understanding.

She could find none. Miss Kennedy was always friendly towards him, but never more. He was always at her call, her faithful servant, like the rest of them, but no more.

Remember that the respect and worship with which she regarded Miss Kennedy were unbounded. But Harry she did not regard as on the same level. No one was good enough for Miss Kennedy. And Harry, clever and bright and good as he seemed, was not too good for herself.

They were a great deal together. All Nelly's evenings were spent in the drawing-room; Harry was there every night; they read together; they talked and danced and sang together. And though the young man said no single word of love, he was always thoughtful for her, in ways that she had never experienced before. Below a certain level men are not thoughtful for women. The cheapeners of women's labour at the East End are not by any means thoughtful towards them. No one had ever considered Nelly at all, except her father.

Need one say more? Need one explain how tender flowers of hope sprang up in this girl's heart and became her secret joy?

This made her watchful, even jealous. And when a change came in Miss Kennedy's manner—it was after her first talk with Lord Jocelyn—when Nelly saw her colour heighten and her eyes grow brighter when Harry appeared, a dreadful pain seized upon her, and she knew, without a word being spoken, that all was over for her. For what was she compared with this glorious woman, beautiful as the day, sweet as a rose in June, full of accomplishments? How could any man regard her beside Miss Kennedy? How could any man think of any other woman when such a goddess had smiled upon him?

In some stories, a girl who has to beat down and crush the young blossoms of love, goes through a great variety of performances, always in the same order. The despair of love demands that this order shall be followed. She therefore turns white; she throws herself on her bed, and weeps by herself, and miserably owns that she loves him; she tells the transparent fib to her sister or mother; she has received a blow from which she will never recover; if she is religious it brings her nearer Heaven; —all this we have read over and over again. Poor little Nelly knew nothing about her grander sisters in misfortune; she knew nothing of what is due to self-respect under similar circumstances; she only perceived that she had been foolish, and tried to show as if that was not so. It was a make-believe of rather a sorry kind. When she was alone she reproached herself; when she was with Miss Kennedy she reproached herself; when she was with Harry she reproached herself. Always herself to blame, no one else, and the immediate result was that her great limpid eyes were surrounded by dark rings, and her cheeks grew thin.

Perhaps there is no misfortune more common among women, especially among women of the better class, than that of disappointed hope. Girls who are hard-worked in shops have no time, as a rule, to think of love at all; love, like other gracious influences, does not come in their way. It is when leisure is arrived at, with sufficiency of food and comfort of shelter and good clothing, that love begins. To most of Angela's girls, Harry Goslett was a creature far above their hopes or thoughts: it was pleasant to dance with him, to hear him play, to hear him talk, but he did not belong to them; it was not for nothing that their brothers called him Gentleman Jack; they were, in fact, 'common' girls, although Angela by the quiet and steady force of example was introducing such innovations in the dressing of the hair, the carriage of the person, and the style of garments, that they were rapidly becoming uncommon girls; but they occupied a position lower than that of Nelly, who was the daughter of a ship's captain now in the asylum, or of Rebekah, who was the daughter of a minister and had the key to all Truth. To Nelly, therefore, there came for a brief space this dream of love; it lasted, indeed, so brief a space, it had such slender foundations of reality, that, when it vanished, she ought to have let it go without a sigh, and have soon felt as if it never had come to her at all. This is difficult of accomplishment, even for women of strong nerves and good physique; but Nelly tried it, and partially succeeded. That is, no one knew her secret except Angela, who divined it, having special reason for this insight, and Rebekah, who perhaps had also her own reasons; but she was a self-contained woman, who kept her own secret.

'She cannot,' said Rebekah, watching Angela and Harry, who were walking together on the Green—'she cannot marry anybody else. It is impossible.'

'But why,' said Nelly—'why do they not tell us, if they are to be married?'

'There are many things,' said Rebekah, 'which Miss Kennedy does not tell us. She has never told us who she is, or where she came from, or how she gets command of money: or how she knows Miss Messenger: or what she was before she came to us. Because, Nelly, you may be sure of one thing: that Miss Kennedy is a lady born and bred. Not that I want to know more than she chooses to tell: and I am as certain of her goodness as I am certain of anything: and what this place will do for the girls if it succeeds no one can tell. Miss Kennedy will tell us perhaps, some day, why she has come among us, pretending to be a dressmaker.'

'Oh!' said Nelly. 'What a thing for us that she did pretend! And oh, Rebekah, what a thing it would be—if she were to leave off pretending! But she would never desert us—never.'

'No, she never would.'

Rebekah continued to watch them.

'You see, Nelly, if she is a lady, he is a gentleman.' Nelly blushed, and then blushed again for very shame at having blushed at all. 'Some gentlemen, I am told, take delight in turning girls' heads. He doesn't do that. Has he ever said a word to you that he shouldn't?'

'No,' said Nelly. 'Never.'

'Well, and he hasn't to me: though as for you, he goes about saying everywhere that you are the prettiest girl in Stepney, next to Miss Kennedy: and as for me and the rest, he has always been like a brother, and a good deal better than most brothers are to their sisters. Being a gentleman, I mean, he is no match for you and me who are real workgirls: and there is nobody in the parish except Miss Kennedy for him.'

'Yet he works for money.'

'So does she. My dear, I don't understand it: I never could understand it. Perhaps, some day, we shall know what it all means. There they are making believe—they go on making believe and pretending, and they seem to enjoy it. Then they walk about together and play in words with each other, one pretending not to understand, and so on. Miss Kennedy says, "But then I speak from hearsay, for I am only a dressmaker;" and he says, "So I read, because, of course, a cabinet-maker can know nothing of these things." Mr. Bunker, who ought to be made to learn the Epistle of St. James by heart, says dreadful things of both of them: and one his own nephew. But what does he know? Nothing.'

'But, Rebekah, Mr. Goslett cannot be a very great gentleman if he is Mr. Bunker's nephew. His father was a Sergeant in the Army.'

'He is a gentleman by education and training. Well, some day we shall learn more. Meantime, I for one am contented that they should marry—are you, Nelly?'

'I too,' she replied, 'am contented if it will make Miss Kennedy happy.'

'He is not convinced of the Truth,' said Rebekah, making her little sectarian reservation, 'but any woman who would want a better husband must be a fool. As for you and me, now, after knowing those two, it will be best for us never to marry, rather than to marry one of the drinking, tobacco-smoking workmen who would have us.'

'Yes,' said Nelly, 'much best. I shall never marry anybody.'

Certainly, it was not likely that more young gentlemen would come their way. One Sunday evening, the girl, being alone with Miss Kennedy, took courage and dared to speak to her. In fact, it was Angela herself who began the talk.

'Let us talk, Nelly,' she began; 'we are quite alone. Tell me, my dear, what is on your mind.'

'Nothing,' said Nelly.

'Yes, there is something. Tell me what it is.'

'Oh, Miss Kennedy, I cannot tell you. It would be rudeness to speak of it.'

'There can be no rudeness, Nelly, between you and me. Tell me what you are thinking.'

Angela knew already what was in her mind, but after the fashion of her sex she dissembled. The brutality of Truth among the male sex is sometimes very painful. And yet we are so proud—some of us—of our earnest attachment to Truth.

'Oh, Miss Kennedy, can you not see that he is suffering?'

'Nelly!' but she was not displeased.

'He is getting thinner: he does not laugh as he used to: and he does not dance as much as he did. Oh, Miss Kennedy, can you not take pity on him?'

'Nelly, you have not told me whom you mean. Nay'—as, with a sudden change of tone, she threw her arms about Nelly's neck, and kissed her—'nay, I know very well whom you mean, my dear.

'I have not offended you?'

'No, you have not offended me. But, Nelly, answer me one question; answer it truthfully. Do you—from your own heart—wish me to take pity on him?'

Nelly answered frankly and truthfully.

'Yes; because how can I wish anything but what will make you happy? Oh! how can any of us help wishing that? And he is the only man who can make you happy. And he loves you.'

'You want him to love me—for my sake—for my own sake. Nelly, dear child, you humble me.'

But Nelly did not understand. She had secretly offered up her humble sacrifice—her pair of turtle-doves—and she knew not that her secret was known.

'She loves him herself,' Angela was thinking, 'and she gives him up for my sake.'

'He is not,' Nelly went on, as if she could by any words of hers persuade Angela—'he is not like any of the common workmen; see how he walks, and how independent he is: and he talks like a gentleman; and he can do all the things that gentlemen learn to do. Who is there, among us all, that he could look at—except you?'

'Nelly, . . . do not make me vain.'

'As for you, Miss Kennedy, there is no man fit for you in all the world. You call yourself a dressmaker, but we know better. Oh! you are a lady. My father says so. He used to have great ladies sometimes on board his ship: he says that never was any one like you for talk and manner. Oh, we don't ask your secret, if you have one. Only some of us—not I for one—are afraid that some day you will go away, and never come back to us again. What should we do then?'

'My dear, I shall not desert you.'

'And if you marry him, you will remain with us. A lady should marry a gentleman, I know—she could not marry any common man. But you are—so you tell us—only a dressmaker; and he is—he says—only a cabinet-maker. And Dick Coppin says that though he can use a lathe, he knows nothing at all about the trade, not even how they talk, nor anything about them. If you two have secrets, Miss Kennedy, tell them to each other.'

'My secrets, if I have any, are very simple, Nelly; and very soon you shall know them: and as for his, I know them already.'

Angela was silent awhile, thinking over this thing. Then she kissed the girl, and whispered—

'Patience yet a little while, dear Nelly. Patience, and I will do—perhaps—what you desire.'

. . . . . .

'Father,' said Nelly later on that night, as they sat together by the fire—'father, I spoke to Miss Kennedy to-night.'

'What did you speak to her about my dear?'

'I told her that we knew—you, and I—that she is a lady, whatever she may pretend.'

'That is quite true, Nelly.'

'And I said that Mr. Goslett is a gentleman, whatever *he* may pretend.'

'That may be true, even though he is not a gentleman born. But that's a very different thing, my dear.'

'Why is it different?'

'Because there are many ladies who go about among poor people, but no gentlemen, unless it's the clergymen. Ladies seem to like it: they do it, however hard the work, for nothing; and all because it is their duty and an imitation of the Lord. Some of them go out nursing. I have told you how I took them out to Scutari: some of them go, not a bit afraid, into the foul courts, and find out the worst creatures in the world and help them: many of them give up their whole lives for the poor and miserable. My dear, there is nothing that a good woman will shrink from; no misery, no den of wickedness—nothing. Sometimes I think Miss Kennedy must be one of those women. Yes: she's got a little money, and she has come here to work, in her own way, among the people here.'

'And Mr. Goslett, father?'

'Men don't do what women do. There may be something in what Mr. Bunker says, that he has reasons of his own for coming here and hiding himself.'

'Oh, father, you don't mean it! And his own uncle, too, to say such a thing!'

'Yes, his own uncle. Mr. Goslett certainly does belong to the place. Though why Bunker should bear him so much malice is more than I can tell.'

'And—father—there is another reason why he should stay here.' Nelly blushed and laughed merrily.

'What is that, my dear?'

Nelly kissed him and laughed again.

'It is your time for a pipe. Let me fill it for you. And the Sunday ration; here it is—and here is a light. Oh, father—to be a sailor so long, and to have no eyes in your head!'

'What!' He understood now. 'You mean Miss Kennedy! Nell, my dear, forgive me. I was thinking that perhaps you——'

'No, father,' she replied, hurriedly. 'That could never be. I want nothing but to stay on here with you and Miss Kennedy, who has been so good to us that we can never—never—thank her enough—nor can we wish her too much joy. But please never, never say that again.'

Her eyes filled with tears.

Captain Sorensen took a book from the table. It was that book which so many people have constantly in their mouths, and yet it never seems to get into their hearts: the book which is so seldom read and so much commented upon. He turned it over till he found a certain passage beginning, 'Who can find a virtuous woman?' He read this right through to the end: one passage—'She stretcheth out her hand unto the poor: yea, she reacheth forth her hands unto the needy'—he read twice; and the last line—'Let her own works praise her in the gates'—he read three times.

'My dear,' he concluded, 'to pleasure Miss Kennedy you would do more than give up a lover: ay, and with a cheerful heart.'

CHAPTER XLI.

BOXING-NIGHT.

'Let us keep Christmas,' said Angela, 'with something like original treatment. We will not dance, because we do that nearly every night.'

'Let us,' said Harry, 'dress up and act.'

What were they to act? That he would find for them. How were they to dress? That they were to find for themselves. The feature of the Christmas festival was, they were to be mummers, and that there was to be mummicking, and, of course, there would be a little feasting, and perhaps a little singing.

'We must have just such a programme,' said Angela to her master of ceremonies, 'as if you were preparing it for the Palace of Delight.'

'This is the only Palace of Delight,' said Harry, 'that we shall ever see. For my own part I desire no other.'

'But, you know, we are going to have another one, much larger than this little place. Have you forgotten all your projects?'

Harry laughed: it was strange how persistently Miss Kennedy returned to the subject again and again; how seriously she talked about it; how she dwelt upon it.

'We must have,' she continued, 'sports which will cost nothing, with dresses which we can make for ourselves. Of course we must have guests to witness them.'

'Guests cost money,' said Harry. 'But, of course, in a Palace of Delight money must not be considered. That would be treason to your principles.'

'We shall not give our guests anything except the cold remains of the Christmas dinner. And as for champagne, we can make our own with a few lemons and a little sugar. Do not forbid us to invite an audience.'

Fortunately, a present which arrived from their patron, Miss Messenger, the day before Christmas Day, enabled them to give their guests a substantial supper at no cost whatever. The present took the form of several hampers, addressed to Miss Kennedy, with a note from the donor conveying her love to the girls and best wishes for the next year, when she hoped to make their acquaintance. The hampers contained turkeys, sausages, ducks, geese, hams, tongues, and the like.

Meantime Harry, as stage manager and dramatist, had devised the tableaux, and the girls between them devised the dresses from a book of costumes. Christmas Day, as everybody remembers, fell last year on a Sunday. This gave the girls the whole of Saturday afternoon and evening with Monday morning for the conversion of the trying-on room into the stage and the show-room for the audience. But the rehearsals took a fortnight, for some of the girls were stupid and some were shy, though all were willing to learn, and Harry was patient. Besides, there was the chance of wearing the most beautiful dresses, and no one was left out: in the allegory, a pastoral invented by their manager, there was a part for every one.

The gift of Miss Messenger made it possible to have two sets of guests; one set consisting of the girls' female relations, and a few private friends of Miss Kennedy's who lived and suffered in the neighbourhood, for the Christmas dinner, held on Monday; and the other set was carefully chosen from a long list for the select audience in the evening. Among them were Dick and his friend the ex-Chartist cobbler, and a few leading spirits of the Advanced Club. They wanted an audience who would read between the lines.

The twenty-sixth day of last December was, in the neighbourhood of Stepney, dull and overcast; it promised to be a day of rebuke for all quiet folk, because it was a general holiday, one of those four terrible days when the people flock in droves to favourite haunts if it is in the summer, or hang about public-houses if it is winter; when in the evening the air is hideous with the shouts of those who roll about the pavements: a day when even Comus and his rabble rout are fain to go home for fear of being hustled and evilly treated by the holiday-makers of famous London town: a day when the peaceful and the pious, the temperate and the timid, stay at home. But to Angela it was a great day, sweet and precious—to use the language of ancient Puritan and modern prig—because it was the first attempt towards the realisation of her great dream; because her girls on this night for the first time showed the fruits of her training in the way they played their parts, their quiet bearing and their new refinement. After the performances of this evening she looked forward with confidence to her palace.

The day began, then, at half-past one, with the big dinner. All the girls could bring their mothers, sisters, and female relations generally, who were informed that Miss Messenger, the mysterious person who interfered perpetually, like a goddess out of a machine, with some new gift, or some device for their advantage, was the giver of the feast.

It was a good and ample Christmas dinner, served in the long workroom by Angela and the girls themselves. There were the turkeys of the hamper, roasted with sausages, and roast beef and roast fowls and roast goose and roast pork, with an immense supply of the vegetables dear to London people; and after this first course there were plum puddings and mince pies. Messenger's ale, with the stout so much recommended by Bunker, flowed freely, and after the dinner there was handed to each a glass of port. None but women and children—no boy over eight being allowed—were present at the feast; and when it was over most of the women got up and went away, not without some little talk with Angela, and some present in kind from the benevolent Miss Messenger. Then they cleared all away and set out the tables again, with the same provisions, for the supper of the evening, at which there would be hungry men.

All the afternoon they spent in completing their arrangements. The guests began to arrive at five. The music was supplied by Angela herself, who did not act, with Captain Sorensen and Harry. The piano was brought downstairs, and stood in the hall outside the trying-on room.

The performance was to commence at six, but everybody had come long before half-past five. At a quarter to six the little orchestra began to play the old English tunes dear to pantomimes.

At the ringing of a bell the music changed to a low monotonous plaint, and the curtain slowly rose on a tableau.

There was a large, bare, empty room; its sole furniture was a table and three chairs; in one corner was a pile of shavings; upon them sat crouching, with her knees drawn up, the pale and worn figure of a girl; beside her were the crutches which showed that she was a cripple; her white cheek was wasted and hollow; her chin was thrust forward as if she was in suffering almost intolerable. During the tableau she moved not, save to swing slowly backwards and forwards upon the shavings which formed her bed.

On the table—for it was night—was a candle in a ginger-beer bottle, and two girls sat at the table working hard; their needles were running a race with starvation; their clothes were in rags; their hair was gathered up in careless knots; their cheeks were pale; they were pinched and cold and feeble with hunger and privation.

Said one of the women present, 'Twopence an hour they can make. Poor things! poor things!'

'Dick,' whispered the cobbler, 'you make a note of it; I guess what's coming.'

The spectators shivered with sympathy. They knew so well what it meant: some of them had themselves dwelt amid these garrets of misery and suffering.

Then voices were heard outside in the street singing.

They were the waits, and they sang the joyful hymns of

Christmas. When the working girls heard the singing, they paid no heed whatever, plying the needle fast and furiously; and the girl in the shavings paid no heed, slowly swinging to and fro in her pain and hunger. At the sight of this callous contempt, this disregard of the invitation to rejoice, as if there was neither hope nor joy for such as themselves, with only a mad desire to work for something to stay the dreadful pains of hunger, some of the women among the spectators wept aloud.

Then the waits went away, and there was silence again.

Then one of the girls—it was Nelly—stopped, and leaned back in her chair with her hand to her heart: the work fell from her lap upon the floor; she sprang to her feet, threw up her hands, and fell in a lifeless heap upon the floor. The other girl went on with her sewing; and the cripple went on swinging backwards and forwards. For they were all three so miserable, that the misery of one could no more touch the other two.

The curtain dropped. The tableau represented, of course, the girls who work for an employer.

After five minutes it rose again. There were the same girls and others; they were sitting at work in a cheerful and well-furnished room; they were talking and laughing. The clock struck six, and they laid aside the work, pushed back the table, and advanced to the front, singing all together. Their faces were bright and happy; they were well dressed; they looked well fed; there was no trouble among them at all; they chattered like singing-birds; they ran and played.

Then Captain Sorensen came in with his fiddle, and first he played a merry tune, at the sound of which the girls caught each other by the waist, and fell to dancing the old Greek ring. Then he played a quadrille, and they danced that simple figure, and as if they liked it; and then he played a waltz, and they whirled round and round.

This was the labour of girls for themselves. Everybody understood perfectly what was meant without the waste of words. Some of the mothers present wiped their eyes, and told their neighbours that this was no play-acting, but the sweet and blessed truth; and that the joy was real, because the girls were working for themselves, and there were no naggings, no fines, no temper, no bullying, no long hours.

After this there was a concert, which seemed a falling off in point of excitement. But it was pretty. Captain Sorensen played some rattling sea ditties; then Miss Kennedy and Mr. Goslett played a duet; then the girls sang a madrigal in parts, so that it was wonderful to hear them, thinking how ignorant they were six months before. Then Miss Kennedy played a solo, and then the girls sang another song. By what magic, by what mystery, were girls so transformed? Then the audience talked together, and whispered that it was all the doing of that one girl—Miss Kennedy—who was believed by everybody to be a lady born and bred, but pretended to be a dressmaker. She it was who got the girls together, gave them the house, found work for them, arranged the time and the duties, and paid them week by week for shorter hours, better wages. It was she who persuaded them to spend their evenings with her instead of trapesing about the streets getting into mischief; it was she who taught them the singing and all manner of pretty things; and they were not spoiled by it, except that they would have nothing more to say to the rough lads and shopboys who had formerly paid them rude court and jested with them on Stepney Green. Uppish they certainly were; what mother would find fault with a girl for holding up her head and respecting herself? And as for manners, why, no one could tell what a difference there was.

The Chartist looked on with a little suspicion at first, which gradually changed to the liveliest satisfaction.

'Dick,' he whispered to his friend and disciple, 'I am sure that if the working men like, they may find the swells their real friends. See, now we've got all the power: they can't take it from us; very good, then, who are the men we should suspect? Why, those who've got to pay the wages—the manufacturers and such. Not the swells. Make a note of that, Dick. It may be the best card you've got to play. A thousand places such as this --planted all about England, started at first by a swell—why, man, the working classes would have not only all the power, but all the money. Oh, if I were ten years younger! What are they going to do next?'

The next thing they did pleased the women, but the men did not seem to care much about it, and the Chartist went on developing the new idea to Dick, who drank it all in, seeing that here, indeed, was a practical and attractive idea, even though it meant a new departure. But the preacher of a new doctrine has generally a better chance than one who only hammers away at an old one.

The stage showed one figure. A beautiful girl, her hair bound in a fillet, clad in Greek dress, simple, flowing, graceful, stood upon a low pedestal. She was intended—it was none other than Nelly—to represent woman dressed as she should be. One after the other there advanced upon the stage, and stood beside this statue, women dressed as women ought not to be: there they were, the hideous fashions of generations; the pinched waists, monstrous hats, high peaks, hoops, and crinolines, hair piled up, hair stuffed out, gigot sleeves, high waists, tight skirts, bending walk, boots with high heels—an endless array.

When Nelly got down from her pedestal and the show was over, Harry advanced to the front and made a little speech. He reminded his hearers that the Association was only six months old; he begged them to consider what was its position now. To be sure, the girls had been started, and that, he said, was the great difficulty; but, the start once made and prejudice removed, they found themselves with work to do, and were now paying their own way and doing well; before long they would be able to take in more hands; it was not all work with them, but there was plenty of play, as they knew. Meantime the girls invited everybody to have supper with them, and after supper there would be a little dance.

They stayed to supper, and they appreciated the gift of Miss Messenger; then they had the little dance—Dick Coppin now taking his part without shame. While the dancing went on, the Chartist sat in a corner of the room and talked with Angela. When he went away, his heart—which was large and generous—burned within him, and he had visions of a time when the voices of the poor shall not be raised against the rich, nor the minds of the rich hardened against the poor. Perhaps he came unconsciously nearer to Christianity, this man who was a scoffer and an unbeliever, that night than he had ever before. To have faith in the future forms, indeed, a larger part of the Christian religion than some of us ever realise. And to believe in a single woman is one step, however small, towards believing in the Divine Man.

CHAPTER XLII.

NOT JOSEPHUS, BUT ANOTHER.

The attractions of a yard peopled with ghosts, discontented figure-heads, and an old man, are great at first, but not likely to be lasting if one does not personally see or converse with the ghosts, and if the old man becomes monotonous. We expect too much of old men. Considering their years we think their recollections must be wonderful. One says, 'Good heavens! Methuselah must recollect William the Conqueror, and King John, and Sir John Falstaff, to say nothing of the Battle of Waterloo!' As a matter of fact, Methuselah generally remembers nothing except that where Cheapside now stands was once a green field. As for Shakespeare, and Coleridge, and Charles Lamb, he knows nothing whatever about them. You see, if he had taken so much interest in life as to care about things going on, he would very soon, like his contemporaries, have worn out the machine, and would be lying, like them, in the grassy enclosure.

Harry continued to go to the carver's yard for some time, but nothing more was to be learnt from him. He knew the family history, however, by this time, pretty well. The Coppins of Stepney, like all middle-class families, had experienced many ups and downs. They had been churchwardens; they had been bankrupts; they had practised many trades; and once there was a Coppin who died leaving houses—twelve houses—three apiece to his children—a meritorious Coppin. Where were those houses now? Absorbed by the omnivorous Uncle Bunker. And how Uncle Bunker got those belonging to Caroline Coppin could not now be ascertained, except from Uncle Bunker himself. Everywhere there are scrapers and scatterers; the scrapers are few, and the scatterers are many. By what scatterer or what process of scattering did Caroline lose her houses?

Meantime, Harry did not feel himself obliged to hold his tongue upon the subject; and everybody knew, before long, that something was going on likely to be prejudicial to Mr. Bunker. People whispered that Bunker was going to be caught out; this rumour lent to the unwilling agent some of the interest which attaches to a criminal. Some went so far as to say that they had always suspected him because he was so ostentatious in his honesty; and this is a safe thing to say, because any person may be reasonably suspected; and if we did not suspect all the world, why the machinery of bolts and bars, keys and patent safes? But it is the wise man who suspects the right person, and it is the justly proud man who strikes an attitude and says, 'What did I tell you?' As yet, however, the suspicions were vague. Bunker, for his part, though not generally a thin-skinned man, easily perceived that there was a change in the way he was received and regarded; people looked at him with marked interest in the streets; they turned their heads and looked after him; they talked about him as he approached; they smiled with meaning; Josephus Coppin met him one day, and asked him why he would not tell his nephew how he obtained those three houses, and what consideration he gave for them. He began, especially of an evening, over brandy-and-water, to make up mentally, over and over again, his own case, so that it might be presented at the right moment absolutely perfect and without a flaw; a paragon among cases. His nephew, whom he now regarded with a loathing almost lethal, was impudent enough to go about saying that he had got those houses unlawfully, was he? Very good; he would have such law as is to be had in England for the humiliation, punishment, stamping out, and ruining of that nephew; ay, if it cost him five hundred pounds, he would. He should like to make his case public; he was not afraid, not a bit; let all the world know: the more the story was known, the more would his contemporaries admire his beautiful and exemplary virtue, patience, and moderation. There were, he said, with the smile of benevolence and the blush of modesty which so well become the good man, transactions, money transactions, between himself and his sister-in-law, especially after her marriage with a man who was a secret scatterer. These money matters had been partly squared by the transfer of the houses, which he took in part payment; the rest he forgave when Caroline died, and when, which showed his own goodness in an electric light, he took over the boy to bring him up to some honest trade, though he was a beggar. Where were the proofs of these transactions? Unfortunately they were all destroyed by fire some years since, after having been carefully preserved, and docketed, and endorsed, as is the duty of every careful man of business.

Now, by dint of repeating this precious story over and over again, the worthy man came to believe it entirely, and to believe that other people would believe it as well. It seemed, in fact, so like the truth, that it would deceive even experts, and pass for that priceless article. At the time when Caroline died, and the boy went to stay with him, no one asked any questions, because it seemed nobody's business to inquire into the interests of the child. After the boy was taken away it gradually became known among the surviving members of the family that the houses had long before, owing to the profligate extravagance of the Sergeant—as careful a man as ever marched—passed into the hands of Bunker, who now had all the Coppin houses. Everything was clean forgotten by this time. And the boy must needs turn up again, asking questions. A young villain! A serpent! But he should be paid out.

A very singular accident prevented the 'paying out' quite in the sense intended by Mr. Bunker. It happened in this way.

One day when Miss Messenger's cabinet-maker and joiner-in-ordinary, having little or nothing to do, was wandering about the Brewery looking about him, lazily watching the process of beer-making on a large and extensive scale, and exchanging the compliments of the season, which was near the new year, with the workmen, it happened that he passed the room in which Josephus had sat for forty years among the juniors. The door stood open, and he looked in, as he had often done before, to nod a friendly salutation to his cousin. There Josephus sat, with grey hair, an elderly man among boys, mechanically ticking off entries among the lads. His place was in the warm corner near the fire: beside him stood a large and massive safe; the same safe out of which during an absence of three minutes the country notes had been so mysteriously stolen.

The story, of course, was well known. Josephus's version of the thing was also well known; everybody, further, knew that until the mystery of that robbery was cleared up, Josephus would remain a junior on thirty shillings a week; lastly, everybody, with the kindliness of heart common to our glorious humanity, firmly believed that Josephus had really cribbed those notes, but had been afraid to present them, and so dropped them into the fire or down a drain. It is truly remarkable to observe how deeply we respect, adore, and venerate virtue, insomuch that we all go about pretending to be virtuous; yet how little we believe in the virtue of each other! It is also remarkable to reflect upon the extensive fields still open to the moralist after all these years of preaching and exhorting.

Now as Harry looked into the room, his eye fell upon the safe, and a curious thing occurred. The fragment of a certain letter from Bob Coppin, in which he sent a message by his friend to his cousin, Squaretoes Josephus, quite suddenly and unexpectedly returned to his memory. Further, the words assumed a meaning.

'Josephus,' he said, stepping into the office, 'lend me a piece of paper and a pencil. Thank you.'

He wrote down the words, exactly as he recollected them, half destroyed by the tearing of the letter.

. . . . 'Josephus, my cousin, that he will . . nd the safe the bundle . . . . for a lark. Josephus is a Squaretoes. I hate a man who won't drink. He will . . . . if he looks there.'

When he had written these words down he read them over again, while the lads looked on with curiosity and some resentment. Cabinet-makers and joiners have no business to swagger about the office of young gentlemen who are clerks in breweries, as if it were their own place. It is an innovation, a levelling of rank.

'Josephus,' Harry whispered, 'you remember your cousin, Bob Coppin?'

'Yes, but these are office hours; conversation is not allowed in the juniors' room.'

He spoke as if he was still a boy, as indeed he was, having been confined to the society of boys, and having drawn the pay of a boy for so many years.

'Never mind rules. Tell me all about Bob.'

'He was a drinker and a spendthrift. That's enough about him.' Josephus spoke in a whisper, being anxious not to discuss the family disgrace among his fellow-clerks.

'Good. Were you a friend as well as a cousin of his?'

'No; I never was. I was respectable—in those days—and desirous of getting my character high for steadiness. I went to evening lectures, and taught in the Wesleyan Sunday schools. Of course, when the notes were stolen it was no use trying any more for character; that was gone: a young man suspected of stealing fourteen thousand pounds can't get any character at all. So I gave up attending the evening lectures, and left off teaching in the school and going to church and everything.'

'You were a great fool, Josephus. You ought to have gone on and fought it out. Now, then, on the day that you lost the money had you seen Bob? Do you remember?'

'That day?' the unlucky junior replied. 'I remember every hour as plain as if it was to-day. Yes, I saw Bob. He came to the office half an hour before I lost the notes; he wanted me to go out with him in the evening—I forget where—some gardens and dancing and prodigalities. I refused to go. In the evening I saw him again, and he did nothing but laugh while I was in misery. It seemed cruel, and the more I suffered the louder he laughed.'

'Did you never see Bob again?'

'No; he went away to sea, and he came home and went away again. But somehow I never saw him. It is twenty years now since he went away last, and was never heard of, nor his ship. So of course he's dead long ago. But what does it matter about Bob? And these are office hours, and there will really be things said if we go on talking. Do go away.'

Harry obeyed and left him. But he went straight to the office of the Chief Accountant, and requested an interview. The Chief Accountant sent word that he could communicate his business through one of the clerks. Harry replied that his business was of a nature which could not be communicated by a clerk, that it was very serious and important business, which must be imparted to the chief alone; and that he would wait his convenience in the outer office. Presently he was ushered into the presence of the great man.

'This is very extraordinary,' said the official. 'What can your business be which is so important that it must not be entrusted to the clerks? Now come to the point, young man. My time is valuable.'

'I want you to authorise me to make a little examination in the junior clerks' room.'

'What examination? And why?'

Harry gave him the fragment of the letter, and explained where he found it.

'I understand nothing. What do you learn from this fragment?'

'There is no date,' said Harry, 'but that matters very little. You will observe that it clearly refers to my cousin, Josephus Coppin.'

'That seems evident. Josephus is not a common name.'

'You know my cousin's version of the loss of those notes?'

'Certainly; he said they must have been stolen during the two or three minutes that he was out of the room.'

'Yes. Now—' Harry wrote a few words to fill up the broken sentences of the letter—'read that, sir.'

'Good heavens!'

'My cousin tells me too,' he went on, 'that this fellow, Bob Coppin, was in the office half an hour before the notes were missed: why, very likely he was at the time hanging about the place: and that in the evening when his cousin was in an agony of distress, Bob was laughing as if the whole thing was a joke.'

'Upon my word,' said the Chief, 'it seems plausible.'

'We can try the thing at once,' said Harry. 'But I should like you to be present when we do.'

'Undoubtedly I will be present. Come, let us go at once. By the way, you are the young man recommended by Miss Messenger, are you not?'

'Yes; not that I have the honour of knowing Miss Messenger personally.'

The Chief Accountant laughed. Cabinet-makers and joiners do not generally know young ladies of position. But this was such a remarkably cheeky young workman.

They took with them four stout fellows from those who toss about the casks of beer. The safe was one of the larger kind, standing three feet six inches high on a strong wooden box with an open front. It was in the corner next to Josephus's seat: between the back of the safe and the wall was a space of an inch or so.

'I must trouble you to change your seat,' said the Chief Accountant to Josephus. 'We are about to move this safe.'

Josephus rose, and the men presently with mighty efforts lugged the great heavy thing a foot or two from its place.

'Will you look, sir?' asked Harry. 'If there is anything there I should like you, who know the whole story, to find it.'

The Chief stooped over the safe and looked behind it. Everybody now was aware that something was going to happen, and though pens continued to be dipped into inkstands with zeal, and heads to be bent over desks with the devotion which always seizes a junior clerk in presence of his chief, all eyes were furtively turned to Josephus's corner.

'There is a bundle of papers,' he said. 'Thank you.' Harry picked them up and placed them in his hands.

The only person who paid no heed to the proceedings was the one most concerned.

The Chief Accountant received them: a rolled bundle, not a tied-up parcel, and covered inch deep with black dust. He opened it and glanced at the contents. Then a strange and unaccountable look came into his eyes as he handed them to Josephus.

'Will you oblige me, Mr. Coppin,' he said, 'by examining these papers?'

It was the first time that the title of Mr. had been bestowed upon Josephus during all the years of his long servitude. He was troubled by it; and he could not understand the expression in his chief's eyes: and when he turned to Harry for an explanation, he met eyes in which the same sympathy and pity were expressed: when he turned to the boys, his fellow-clerks, he was struck by their faces of wondering expectation.

What was going to happen?

Recovering his presence of mind, he held out the dusty papers and shook the dust off them.

Then he began slowly to obey orders and to examine them.

Suddenly he began to turn them over with fierce eagerness. His eyes flashed; he gasped.

'Come, Josephus,' said his cousin, taking his arm; 'gently, gently. What are they—these papers?'

The man laughed—an hysterical laugh.

'They are—ha! ha!—they are—ha! ha! ha!' He did not finish because his voice failed him, but he dropped into a chair with his head in his hands.

'They are country bank notes, and other papers,' said Harry, taking them from his cousin's hands. He had interpreted the missing words rightly.

The Chief looked round the room. 'Young men,' he said solemnly, 'a wonderful thing has happened. After many years of undeserved suspicion and unmerited punishment, Mr. Coppin's character is cleared at last. We cannot restore to him the years he has lost, but we can rejoice that his innocence is established.'

'Come, Josephus,' said Harry, 'bear your good fortune as you have borne the bad. Rouse yourself.'

The senior junior clerk lifted his head and looked around. His cheeks were white: his eyes were filled with tears: his lips were trembling.

'Take your cousin home,' said the Chief to Harry, 'and then come back to my office.'

Harry led Josephus, unresisting, home to the Boarding-house.

'We have had a shock, Mrs. Bormalack. Nothing to be alarmed about, quite the contrary. The bank notes have been found after all these years, and my cousin has earned his promotion and recovered his character. Give him some brandy-and-water and make him lie down for a bit.' For the man was dazed. He could not understand as yet what had happened.

Harry placed him in the arm-chair and left him to the care of the landlady. Then he went back to the Brewery.

The Chief Brewer was with the Chief Accountant, and they were talking over what was best to be done. They said very kind things about intelligence, without which good fortune and lucky finds are wasted; and they promised to represent Harry's conduct in a proper light to Miss Messenger, who would be immediately communicated with. And Josephus would at once receive a very substantial addition to his pay, a better position, and more responsible work.

'May I suggest, gentlemen,' said Harry, 'that a man who is fifty-five, and has all his life been doing the simple work of a junior, may not be found equal to more responsible work?'

'That may be the case.'

'My cousin, when the misfortune happened, left off taking any interest in things. I believe he has never opened a book or learned anything in all these years.'

'Well, we shall see.' A workman was not to be taken into counsel. 'There is, however, something here which seems to concern yourself. Your mother was one Caroline Coppin, was she not?'

'Yes.'

'Then these papers, which were deposited by some persons unknown with Mr. Messenger, most likely for greater care, and placed in the safe by him, belong to you, and I hope will prove of value to you.'

Harry took them without much interest, and came away.

In the evening Josephus held a reception. All his contemporaries in the Brewery, the men who entered with himself; all those who had passed over his head, all those with whom he had been a junior in the Brewery, called to congratulate him. At the moment he felt as if this universal sympathy fully made up for all his sufferings of the past. Nor was it until the morning that he partly perceived the truth, that no amount of sympathy would restore his vanished youth and give him what he had lost. But he will never quite understand this; and he looked upon himself as having begun again from the point where he stopped. When the reception was over and the last man gone, he began to talk about his future.

'I shall go on again with the evening course,' he said, 'just where I left it off. I remember we were having Monday for book-keeping by single and double entry, Tuesday for French, Thursday for arithmetic—we were in mixed fractions,—and Friday for Euclid. Then I shall take up my class at the Sunday school again, and I shall become a full Church member of the Wesleyan Connection. For though my father was once churchwarden at Stepney Church, I always favoured the Wesleyans myself.'

He talked as if he was a boy again, with all his life before him; and, indeed, at the moment he thought he was.

CHAPTER XLIII.

OH, MY PROPHETIC SOUL!

Harry thought nothing about the papers which were found among the notes that evening, because he was wholly engaged in the contemplation of a man who had suddenly gone back thirty-five years in his life. The grey hairs, thin at the top and gone at the temples, were not, it is true, replaced by the curly brown locks of youth, though one thinks that Josephus must always have been a straight-haired young man. But it was remarkable to hear that man of fifty-five talking as if the years had rolled backwards, and he could take up the thread of life where he had dropped it so long ago. He spoke of his evening lectures and his Sunday school with the enthusiasm of a boy. He would study—work of that sort always paid: he would prepare his lessons for the school beforehand, and stand well with the superintendent: it was good for men in business offices, he said, to have a good character with the superintendent. Above all, he would learn French and book-keeping, with mensuration, gauging, and astronomy, at the Beaumont Institute. All these things would come in useful, some time or the other, at the Brewery; besides, it helps a man to be considered studious in his habits. He became, in fact, in imagination a young man once more. And because in the old days when he had a character to earn, he did not smoke tobacco, so now he forgot that former solace of the day, his evening pipe.

'The Brewery,' he said, 'is a splendid thing to get into. You can rise: you may become—ah! even Chief Accountant: you may look forward to draw over a thousand a year at the Brewery, if you are steady and well conducted, and get a good name. It is not every one, mind you, gets the chance of such a service. And once in, always in. That's the pride of the Brewery. No turning out: there you stay, with your salary always rising, till you die.'

In the morning, the exultation of spirits was exchanged for a corresponding depression. Josephus went to the Brewery, knowing that he should sit on that old seat of his no longer.

He went to look at it: the wooden stool was worn black: the desk was worn black: he knew every cut and scratch in the lid at which he had written so many years. There were all the books at which he had worked so long: not hard work, nor work requiring thought, but simple entering and ticking off of names, which a man can do mechanically—on summer afternoons, with the window open and an occasional bee buzzing in from Hainault Forest, and the sweet smell of the vats and the drowsy rolling of the machinery—one can do the work half asleep and never make any mistake. Now he would have to undertake some different kind of work, more responsible work: he would have to order and direct: he would have a chair instead of a stool, and a table instead of a desk. So that he began to wish that he had in the old days gone farther in his studies—but he was always slow at learning—before the accident happened; and to wonder if anything at all remained of the knowledge he had then painfully acquired, after all these years.

As a matter of fact, nothing remained. Josephus had become perfectly, delightfully, inconceivably stupid. He had forgotten everything, and could now learn no new thing. Pending the decision of Miss Messenger, to whom the case was referred, they tried him with all sorts of simple work—correspondence, answering letters, any of the things which require a little intelligence. Josephus could do nothing. He sat like a helpless boy and looked at the documents. Then they let him alone, and for a while he came every day, sat all day long, half asleep, and did nothing, and was much less happy than when he had been kept at work from nine o'clock in the morning till six o'clock at night.

When Harry remembered the packet of papers placed in his hand, which was on the following morning, he read them. And the effect of his reading was that he did not go to work that morning at all.

He was not a lawyer, and the principal paper was a legal instrument, the meaning of which it took him some little time to make out.

'Hum—hum—um—why can't they write plain English? "I give to my said trustees John Skelton and Benjamin Bunker the three freehold houses as follows that called number twenty-nine on Stepney Green forty-five in Beaumont Square and twenty-three in Redman's Row upon trust to apply the rents and income of the same as in their absolute discretion they may think fit for the maintenance education and benefit of the said Caroline until she be twenty-one years old or until she marry and to invest from time to time the accumulations of such rents and income as is hereintofore provided and to apply the same when invested in all respects as I direct concerning the last above-mentioned premises And when the said Caroline shall attain the age of twenty-one or shall marry I direct my said trustees to pay to her the said rents and income and the income of the accumulation of the same if any during her life by four equal quarterly payments for her sole and separate use free from the debts and engagements of any husband or husbands she may marry and I direct that on the death of the said Caroline my said trustees shall hold and stand possessed of all the said premises for such person or persons and in such manner in all respects as the said Caroline shall by deed or will appoint And in default of such appointment and so far as the same shall not extend upon trust"—and so on—and so on.'

Harry read this document with a sense, at first, of mystification. Then he read it a second time, and began to understand it.

'The houses,' he said, 'my mother's houses, are hers, free from any debts contracted by her husband: they are vested in trustees for her behalf: she could not sell or part with them. And the trustees were John Skelton and Benjamin Bunker. John Skelton—gone to Abraham's bosom, I suppose. Benjamin Bunker—where will he go to? The houses were tied up—settled—entailed.'

He read the document right through for the third time.

'So,' he said. 'The house at number twenty-nine Stepney Green. That is the house which Bunker calls his own; the house of the Associated Dressmakers; and it's mine—mine.' He clenched his fist and looked dangerous. 'Then the house at twenty-three Redman's Row, and at forty-five Beaumont Square. Two more houses. Also mine. And Bunker, the perfidious Bunker, calls them all his own! What shall be done to Bunker?'

'Next,' he went on, after reading the document again, 'Bunker is a fraudulent trustee, and his brother trustee too, unless he has gone dead. Of that there can be no doubt whatever. That virtuous and benevolent Bunker was my mother's trustee—and mine. And he calmly appropriates the trust to his own uses—Uncle Bunker! Uncle Bunker!

'I knew from the beginning that there was something wrong. First, I thought he had taken a sum of money from Lord Jocelyn. Then I found out that he had got possession of houses in a mysterious manner. And now I find that he was simply the trustee. Wicked Uncle Bunker!'

Armed with this precious document, he put on his hat and walked straight off, resolution on his front, towards his uncle's office. He arrived just when Mr. Bunker was about to start on a daily round among his houses. By this frequent visitation he kept up the hearts of his tenants, and taught them the meaning of necessity; so that they put by their money and religiously paid the rent. Else——

'Pray,' said Harry, 'be so good as to take off your hat, and sit down and have five minutes' talk with me.'

'No, sir,' said Bunker, 'I will not. You can go away, do you hear? Be off: let me lock my office and go about my own business.'

'Do take off your hat, my uncle.'

'Go, sir, do you hear?'

'Sit down and let us talk—my honest—trustee!'

Mr. Bunker dropped into a chair.

In all the conversations and dramatic scenes made up in his own mind to account for the possession of the houses it had never occurred to him that the fact of his having been a trustee would come to light. All were dead, except himself, who were concerned with that trust: he had forgotten by this time that there was any deed: by ignoring the trust he simplified, to his own mind, the transfer of the houses: and during all these years he had almost forgotten the obligations of the trust.

'What do you mean?' he stammered.

'Virtuous uncle! I mean that I know all. Do you quite understand me? I mean really and truly all. Yes: all that there is to know: all that you hide away in your own mind and think that no one knows.'

'What—what—what do you know?'

'First I know which the houses are—I mean, my houses—my mother's houses. The house in Stepney Green that you have let to Miss Kennedy is one; a house in Beaumont Square—do you wish to know the number?—is another; and a house in Redman's Row—and do you want to know the number of that?—is the third. You have collected the rents of those houses and paid those rents to your own account for twenty years and more.'

'Go on. Let us hear what you pretend to know. Suppose they were Caroline's houses, what then?' He spoke with an attempt at bounce; but he was pale, and his eyes were unsteady.

'This next. These houses, man of probity, were not my mother's property to dispose of as she pleased.'

'Oh, whose were they, then?'

'They were settled upon her and her heirs after her; and the property was placed in the hands of two trustees: yourself, my praiseworthy; and a certain John Skelton, of whom I know nothing. Presumably, he is dead'

Mr. Bunker made no reply at all. But his cheek grew paler.

'Shall I repeat this statement, or is that enough for you?' asked Harry. 'The situation is pretty, though perhaps not novel: the heir has gone away, probably never to come back again; the trustee sole surviving, no doubt receives the rents. Heir comes back. Trustee swears the houses are his own. When the trustee is brought before a court of law and convicted, the judge says that the case is one of peculiar enormity, and must be met by transportation for five-and-twenty years; five—and—twenty—years, my Patriarch! think of that, in uniform and with short hair.'

Mr. Bunker said nothing. But by the agitation of his fingers it was plain that he was thinking a great deal.

'I told you,' cried Harry. 'I warned you, some time ago, that you must now begin to think seriously about handcuffs and prison, and men in blue. The time has come, now, when, unless you make restitution of all that you have taken, action will be taken, and you will realise what it is that people think of the fraudulent trustee. Uncle Bunker, my heart bleeds for you.'

'Why did you come here?' asked his uncle, piteously. 'Why did you come here at all? We got on very well without you—very well and comfortably, indeed.

This seemed a feeble sort of bleat. But, in fact, the Bunker's mind was for the moment prostrated. He had no sound resistance left.

'I offered you,' he went on, 'twenty-five pounds—to go. I'll double it—there. I'll give you fifty pounds to go, if you'll go at once. So that there will be an end to all this trouble.'

'Consider,' said Harry, 'there's the rent of Miss Kennedy's house—sixty-five pounds a year for that: there's the house in Beaumont Square—fifty for that; and the house in Redman's Row at five-and-twenty at least; comes to a hundred and forty pounds a year, which you have drawn, my precious uncle, for twenty-one years at least. That makes, without counting interest, two thousand nine hundred and forty pounds. And you want to buy me off for fifty pounds!'

'Not half the money—not half the money,' his uncle groaned. 'There's repairs and painting—and bad tenants: not half the money.

'We will say, then,' lightly replied his nephew, as if nine hundred were a trifle, 'we will say two thousand pounds. The heir to that property has come back: he says, "Give me my houses and give me an account of the discharge of your trust." Now'—Harry rose from the table on which he had been sitting—'let us have no more bounce: the game is up. I have in my pocket—here,' he tapped his coat pocket, 'the original deed itself. Do you want to know where it was found? Behind a safe at the Brewery, where it was hidden by your brother-in-law, Bob Coppin, with all the country notes which got Josephus into a mess. As for the date, I will remind you that it was executed about thirty-five years ago, when my mother was still a girl and unmarried, and you had recently married her sister. I have the deed here. What is more, it has been seen by the Chief Accountant at the Brewery, who gave it me. Bunker, the game is up.'

He moved towards the door.

'Have you anything to say before I go? I am now going straight to a lawyer.'

'What is the—the—lowest——Oh! good Lord!—the very lowest figure that you will take to square it? Oh! be merciful; I am a poor man, indeed a very poor man, though they think me warm. Yet I must scrape and save to get along at all.'

'Two thousand,' said Harry.

'Make it fifteen hundred. Oh! fifteen hundred to clear off all scores, and then you can go away out of the place; I could borrow fifteen hundred.'

'Two thousand,' Harry repeated. 'Of course, besides the houses, which are mine.'

'*Besides* the houses? Never. You may do your worst. You may drag your poor old uncle, now sixty years of age, before the courts, but two thousand besides the houses? Never!'

He banged the floor with his stick, but his agitation was betrayed by the nervous tapping of the end upon the oilcloth which followed the first hasty bang.

'No bounce, if you please.' Harry took out his watch. 'I will give you five minutes to decide; or, if your mind is already made up, I will go and ask advice of a lawyer at once.'

'I cannot give you that sum of money,' Bunker declared: 'it is not that I would not; I would if I could. Business has been bad: sometimes I've spent more than I've made; and what little I've saved I meant always for you—I did indeed. I said, I will make it up to him. He shall have it back with——'

'One minute gone,' said Harry relentlessly.

'Oh! this is dreadful. Why, to get even fifteen hundred I should have to sell all my little property at a loss! and what a dreadful thing it is to sell property at a loss! Give me more time to consider, only a week or so, just to look round.'

'Three minutes left,' said Harry the hardened.

'Oh! oh! oh!' He burst into tears and weeping of genuine grief, and shame, and rage. 'Oh! that a nephew should be found to persecute his uncle in such a way! Where is your Christian charity? Where is forgiving and remitting?'

'Only two minutes left,' said Harry, unmoved.

Then Bunker fell upon his knees: he grovelled and implored pardon; he offered one house, two houses, and twelve hundred pounds, fifteen hundred pounds, eighteen hundred pounds.

'One minute left,' said Harry.

Then he sat down and wiped the tears from his eyes, and in good round terms—in Poplar, Limehouse, Shadwell, Wapping, and Ratcliff Highway terms—he cursed his nephew and the houses and the trust, and all that therein lay, because before the temptation came he was an honest man, whereas now he should never be able to look Stepney in the face again.

'Time's up,' said Harry, putting on his hat.

In face of the inevitable, Mr. Bunker showed an immediate change of front. He neither prayed, nor wept, nor swore. He became once more the complete man of business. He left the stool of humiliation, and seated himself on his own Windsor chair before his own table. Here, pen in hand, he seemed as if he was dictating rather than accepting terms.

'Don't go,' he said. 'I accept.'

'Very good,' Harry replied. 'You know what is best for yourself. As for me, I don't want to make more fuss than is necessary. You know the terms?'

'Two thousand down; the three houses; and a complete discharge in full of all claims. Those are the conditions.'

'Yes, those are the conditions.'

'I will draw up the discharge,' said Mr. Bunker, 'and then no one need be any the wiser.'

Harry laughed. This cool and business-like compromise of felony pleased him.

'You may draw it up if you like. But my opinion of your ability is so great, that I shall have to show the document to a solicitor for his approval and admiration.'

Mr. Bunker was disconcerted. He had hoped—that is, thought—he saw his way; but never mind. He quickly recovered, and said, with decision,—

'Go to Lawyer Pike in the Mile End Road.'

'Why? Is the Honourable Pike a friend of yours?'

'No, he isn't; that is why I want you to go to him. Tell him that you and I have long been wishing to clear up these accounts, and that you've agreed to take the two thousand with the houses.' Mr. Bunker seemed now chiefly anxious that the late deplorable scene should be at once forgotten and forgiven. 'He said the other day that I was nothing better than a common grinder and oppressor. Now, when he sees what an honourable trustee I am, he will be sorry he said that. You can tell everybody if you like. Why, what is it? Here's my nephew comes home to me and says, Give me my houses. I say, Prove your title. Didn't I say so? How was I to know that he was my nephew? Then the gentleman comes who took him away, and says, He is your long-lost nephew; and I say, Take your houses, young man, with the accumulations of the rent hoarded up for you. Why, you can tell everybody that story.'

'I will leave you to tell it, Bunker, your own way. Everybody will believe that way of telling the story. What is more, I will not go out of my way to contradict it.'

'Very good, then. And on that understanding I withdraw all the harsh things I may have said to you, nephew. And we can be good friends again.'

'Certainly, if you like,' said Harry, and fairly ran away for fear of being called upon to make more concessions.

'It's a terrible blow!' The old man sat down and wiped his forehead. 'To think of two thousand down! But it might have been much worse. Ah! it might have been very, very much worse. I've done better than I expected, when he said he had the papers. The young man's a fool—a mere fool. The houses let for 150*l.* a year, and they have never been empty for six months together; and the outside repairs are a trifle, and I've saved it all every year. Ha! now a hundred and fifty pounds a year for twenty years and more, at compound interest only five per cent., is close on 5,000*l.* I've calculated it out often enough to know. Yes, and I've made five per cent. on it, and sometimes six and seven, and more, with no losses. It might have been far, far worse. It's come to 7,000*l.* if it's a penny. And to get rid of that awful fear and that devil of a boy with his grins and his sneers at 2,000*l.*, why, it's cheap, I call it cheap. As for the houses, I'll get them back, see if I don't.'

CHAPTER XLIV.

A FOOL AND HIS MONEY.

Mr. Pike, the solicitor of the Mile End Road, does not belong to the story—which is a pity, because he has many enviable qualities—further than is connected with Harry's interview with him.

He read the documents and heard the story from beginning to end. When he had quite mastered all the details he began mildly to express astonishment and pity that any young man could be such a fool. This was hard, because Harry really thought he had done a mighty clever thing. 'You have been taken in, sir,' said Mr. Pike, 'in a most barefaced and impudent manner. Two thousand pounds! Why, the mere rent alone, without counting interest, is three thousand. Go away, sir; find out this fraudulent impostor, and tell him that you will have nothing to do with him short of a full account and complete restitution.'

'I cannot do that,' said Harry.

'Why not?'

'Because I have passed my word.'

'I think, young man, you said you were a cabinet-maker—though you look something better.'

'Yes, I belong to that trade.'

'Since when, may I ask, have cabinet-makers been so punctilious as to their promises?'

'The fact is,' said Harry gravely, 'we have turned over a new leaf, and are now all on the side of truth and honour.'

'Humph! Then there is nothing to do but to give the man a receipt in full and a discharge. You are of age; you can do this if you like. Shall I draw it up for you, and receive the money, and take over the houses?'

. . . . . .

This was settled, therefore, and in this way Harry became a rich man, with houses and money in the funds.

As for Bunker, he made the greatest mistake in his life when he sent his nephew to Mr. Pike. He should have known, but he was like the ostrich when he runs his head into the sand, and believes from the secure retreat that he is invisible to his hunters. For his own version of the incident was palpably absurd: and, besides, Mr. Pike heard Harry's account of the matter. Therefore, though Bunker thought to heap coals of fire upon his enemy's head, he only succeeded in throwing them under his feet, which made him kick—'for who can go upon hot coals and his feet not be burned?' The good man is now, therefore, labouring under a cloud of prejudice which does not seem to lift, though perhaps he will live it down. Other events have happened since, which have operated to his prejudice. Everybody knows how he received his nephew; what wicked things he said everywhere about him; and what rumours he spread about Miss Kennedy: everybody knows that he had to disgorge houses—actually, houses—which he had appropriated. This knowledge is common property: and it is extremely unpleasant for Mr. Bunker when he takes his walks abroad to be cruelly assailed by questions which hit harder than any brickbat: they are hurled at him by working men and by street boys. 'Who stole the 'ouse?' for instance, is a very nasty thing to be said to a gentleman who is professionally connected with house property. I know not how this knowledge came to be so generally known. Certainly Harry did not spread it abroad. People, however, are not fools, and can put things together: where the evil-doings and backslidings of their friends are concerned they are surprisingly sharp.

Now when the ownership of the house in Stepney Green became generally known, there immediately sprang up, as always happens on occasions of discovery, rooting out of facts, or exposure of wickedness, quite a large crop of old inhabitants ready to declare that they knew all along that the house on Stepney Green was one of those belonging to old Mr. Coppin. He bought it, they said, of Mr. Messenger, who was born there; and it was one of three left to Caroline, who died young. Who would believe that Mr. Bunker could have been so wicked? Where is faith in brother man since so eminent a professor of honesty has fallen?

Mr. Bunker suffers, but he suffers in silence; he may be seen any day in the neighbourhood of Stepney Green, still engaged in his usual business: people may talk behind his back, but talk breaks no bones: they don't dare talk before his face: though he has lost two thousand pounds, there is still money left—he feels that he is a warm man, and has money to leave behind him: it will be said of him that he cut up well. Warmth of all kinds comforts a man; but he confesses with a pang that he did wrong to send his nephew to that lawyer, who took the opportunity, when he drew up the discharge and receipt, of giving him an opinion—unasked and unpaid for—as to his conduct in connection with the trust. There could be no mistake at all about the meaning and force of that opinion. And, oddly enough, whenever Mr. Bunker sees the Queen's omnibus—that dark-painted vehicle, driven by a policeman—pass along the road, he thinks of Mr. Pike, and that opinion returns to his memory, and he feels just exactly as if a bucket of cold water was trickling down his back by the nape of the neck. Even in warm weather this is disagreeable. And it shows that the lawyer must have spoken very strong words indeed, and that although Mr. Bunker, like the simple ones and the scorners, wished for none of the lawyers' counsel, unlike them he did not despise their reproof. Yet he is happier, now that the blow has fallen, than he was while he was awaiting it and dreaming of handcuffs.

We anticipate: but we have, indeed, seen almost the last of Mr. Bunker. It is sad to part with him. But we have no choice.

In the evening Harry went as usual to the drawing-room. He stayed, however, after the girls went away. There was nothing unusual in his doing so. 'Girls in my position,' said the dressmaker, 'are not tied by the ordinary rules.' To-night, however, he had something to say.

'Congratulate me,' he cried, as soon as they were alone. 'I have turned out, as the story-books say, to be the heir to vast sums of money.'

Angela turned pale. She was reassured, however, on learning the extent of the heritage.

'Consider my romantic story,' said Harry. 'Instead of finding myself the long-lost heir, strawberry-mark and all, to an earldom, I am the son of a Sergeant in the Line. And then, just as I am getting over the blow, I find myself the owner of three houses and two thousand pounds. What workman ever got two thousand pounds before? There was an under-gardener I knew,' he went on meditatively, 'who once got a hundred: he called it a round hundred, I remember. He and his wife went on the Hospitable Drink for a fortnight: then they went to hospital for a month with Trimmings: and then went back to work—the money all gone—and joined the Primitive Methodists. Can't we do something superior in the shape of a Burst, or a Boom, for the girls, with two thousand pounds?'

'Tell me,' said Angela, 'how you got it.'

He narrated the whole story, for her instruction and amusement, with some dramatic force impersonating Bunker's wrath, terror, and entreaties, and final business-like collapse.

'So that,' said Angela, 'you are now a man of property, and will, I suppose, give up the work at the Brewery.'

'Do you think I should?'

'I do not like to see any man idle, and—' she hesitated—'especially you.'

'Thank you,' said Harry. 'Then I remain. The question of the two thousand pounds—my cool Two Thousand—I am the winner of the Two Thousand—in reserve. As for this house, however, decided steps must be taken. Listen, Queen of the Mystery of Dress! You pay Bunker sixty-five pounds a year or so for the rent of this house; that is a good large deduction from the profits of the Association. I have been thinking, if you approve, that I will have this house conveyed to you in trust for the Association. Then you will be rent-free.'

'But that is a very, very generous offer. You really wish to give us this house altogether for ourselves?'

'If you will accept it.'

'You have only these houses, and you give us the best of them. Is it right and just to strip yourself?'

'How many houses should I have? Now there are two left, and their rent brings in seventy pounds a year, and I have two thousand pounds which will bring in another eighty pounds a year. I am rich—much too rich for a common cabinet-maker.'

'Oh!' she said, 'what can we do but accept? And how shall we show our gratitude? But, indeed, we can do nothing.'

'I want nothing,' said Harry. 'I have had so much happiness in this place that I can want for nothing. It is for me to show my gratitude.'

'Thank you,' she replied, giving him her hand. He stooped and kissed it, but humbly, as one who accepts a small favour gratefully and asks for no more.

They were alone in the drawing-room; the fire was low; only one lamp was burning; Angela was sitting beside the fire; her face was turned from him. A mighty wave of love was mounting in the young man's brain; but a little more, a very little more, and he would have been kneeling at her feet. She felt the danger; she felt it the more readily because she was so deeply moved herself. What had she given the girls, out of her abundance, compared with what he had given, out of his slender portion? Her eyes filled with tears. Then she sprang to her feet and touched his hand again.

'Do not forget your promise,' she said.

'My promise? Oh! how long——'

'Patience,' she replied. 'Give me a little while—a little while—only—and——'

'Forgive me,' he said, kissing her hand again. 'Forgive me.'

'Let me go,' she went on. 'It is eleven o'clock.' They put out the lamp and went out. The night was clear and bright.

'Do not go in just yet,' said Harry. 'It is pleasant out here, and I think the stars are brighter than they are at the West End.'

'Everything is better here,' said Angela, 'than at the West

End. Here we have hearts, and can feel for each other. Here we are all alike—workmen and workwomen together.'

'You are a prejudiced person. Let us talk of the Palace of Delight—your dream.'

'Your invention,' said Angela.

'Won't my two thousand go some way to starting it? Perhaps, if we could just start it, the thing would go on of its own accord. Why, see what you have done with your girls already.'

'But I must have a big Palace—a noble building, furnished with everything that we want. No, my friend, we will take your house because it is a great and noble gift, but you shall not sacrifice your money. Yet we will have that Palace, and before long. And when it is ready——'

'Yes, when it is ready.'

'Perhaps the opening of the Palace will be, for all of us, the beginning of a new happiness.'

'You speak in a parable.'

'No,' she said, 'I speak in sober earnestness. Now let me go. Remember what I say: the opening of the Palace may be, if you will—for all of us——'

'For you and me?'

'For—yes—for you—and for me. Good night.'

CHAPTER XLV.

LADY DAVENANT'S DINNER PARTY.

Lady Davenant had now been in full enjoyment of her title in Portman Square, where one enjoys such things more thoroughly than on Stepney Green, for four or five weeks. She at first enjoyed it so much that she thought of nothing but the mere pleasure of the greatness. She felt an uplifting of heart every time she walked up and down the stately stairs; another every time she sat at the well-furnished dinner-table; and another whenever she looked about her in the drawing-room. She wrote copious letters to her friend Aurelia Tucker during these days. She explained with fulness of detail, and in terms calculated to make that lady expire of envy, the splendour of her position; and, for at least five weeks, she felt as if the hospitality of Miss Messenger actually brought with it a complete recognition of the claim. Her husband, not so sanguine as herself, knew very well that the time would come when the Case would have to be taken up again and sent in to the proper quarter for examination. Meantime he was resigned, and even happy. Three square meals a day, each of them abundant, each a masterpiece of art, were enough to satisfy that remarkable twist which, as her ladyship was persuaded, one knows not on what grounds, had always been a distinguishing mark of the Davenants. Familiarity speedily reconciled him to the presence of the footmen; he found in the library a most delightful chair in which he could sleep all the morning; and it pleased him to be driven through the streets in a luxurious carriage under soft warm furs, in which one can take the air and get a splendid appetite without fatigue.

They were seen about a great deal. It was a part of Angela's design that they should, when the time came for going back again, seem to themselves to have formed a part of the best society in London. Therefore she gave instructions to her maid that her visitors were to go to all the public places, the theatres, concerts, exhibitions, and places of amusement. The little American lady knew so little what she ought to see and whither she ought to go, that she fell back on Campion for advice and help. It was Campion who suggested a theatre in the evening, the Exhibition of Old Masters or the Grosvenor Gallery in the morning, and Regent Street in the afternoon; it was Campion who pointed out the recognised superiority of Westminster Abbey, considered as a place of worship for a lady of exalted rank, over a chapel up a back street, of the Baptist persuasion, to which at her own home Lady Davenant had belonged. It was Campion who went with her and showed her the shops, and taught her the delightful art of spending her money—the money 'lent' her by Miss Messenger—in the manner becoming to a peeress. She was so clever and sharp, that she caught at every hint dropped by the lady's-maid; she reformed her husband's ideas of evening dress; she humoured his weaknesses; she let him keep his eyes wide open at a farce or a ballet on the understanding that at a concert or a sermon he might blamelessly sleep through it: she even began to acquire rudimentary ideas on the principles of Art.

'I confess, my dear Aurelia,' she wrote, 'that habit soon renders even these marble halls familiar. I have become perfectly reconciled to the splendour of English patrician life, and now feel as if I had been born to it. Tall footmen no longer frighten me, nor the shouting of one's name after the theatre. Of course the outward marks of respect one receives as one's due, when one belongs, by the gift of Providence, to a great and noble house.'

This was all very pleasant; yet Lady Davenant began to yearn for somebody, if it was only Mrs. Bormalack, with whom she could converse. She wanted a long chat. Perhaps Miss Kennedy or Mrs. Bormalack, or the sprightly Mr. Goslett, might be induced to come and spend a morning with her, or a whole day, if only they would not feel shy and frightened in so splendid a place.

Meantime some one 'connected with the Press' got to hear of a *soi-disant* Lord Davenant who was often to be seen with his wife in boxes at theatres and other places of resort. He heard, this intellectual connection of the Press, people asking each other who Lord Davenant was; he inquired of the Red Book, and received no response; he thereupon perceived that here was an opportunity for a sensation and a mystery. He found out where Lord Davenant was living, by great good luck—it was through taking a single four of whisky in a bar frequented by gentlemen in plush; and he proceeded to call upon his lordship and to interview him.

The result appeared in a long *communiqué* which attracted general and immediate interest. The journalist set forth at length and in the most graphic manner the strange and romantic career of the Condescending Wheelwright; he showed how the discovery was made, and how, after many years, the illustrious pair had crossed the Atlantic to put forward their claim; and how they were offered the noble hospitality of a young lady of princely fortune. It was a most delightful godsend to the paper in which it appeared, and it came at a time when the House was not sitting, and there was no wringle-wrangle of debates to furnish material for the columns of big type which are supposed to sway the masses. The other papers therefore seized upon the topic and had leading articles upon it, in which the false Demetrius, the pretending Palæologus, Perkin Warbeck, Lambert Simnel, George Psalmanazar, the Languishing Nobleman, the Earl of Mar, the Count of Albany, with other claims and claimants, furnished illustrations to the claims of the Davenants. The publicity given to the Case by these articles delighted her ladyship beyond everything, while it abashed and confounded her lord. He saw in it the beginning of more exertion, and strenuous efforts after the final recognition. And she carefully cut out all the articles and sent them to her nephew Nicholas, to her friend Aurelia Tucker, and to the editor of the *Canaan City Express* with her compliments. And she felt all the more, in the midst of this excitement, that if she did not have some one to talk to she must go back to Stepney Green and spend a day. Or she would die.

It was at this juncture that Campion, perhaps inspired by secret instructions, suggested that her ladyship must be feeling a little lonely, and must want to see her friends. Why not, she said, ask them to dinner?

A dinner party, Lady Davenant reflected, would serve not only to show her old friends the reality of her position, but would also please them as a mark of kindly remembrance. Only, she reflected, dinner at Stepney Green had not the same meaning that it possesses at the West End. The best dinner, in that locality, is that which is most plentiful, and there are no attempts made to decorate a table. Another thing, dinner is taken universally between one o'clock and two. 'I think, Clara Martha,' said his lordship, whom she consulted on this affair of state, 'that at any time of day such a Feast of Belteshazzar as you will give them will be grateful; and they may call it dinner or supper, whichever they please.'

Thereupon Lady Davenant wrote a letter to Mrs. Bormalack inviting the whole party. She explained that they had met with the most splendid hospitality from Miss Messenger, in whose house they were still staying; that they had become public characters, and had been the subject of discussion in the papers, which caused them to be much stared at and followed in the streets, and in theatres and concert-rooms; that they were both convinced that their Case would soon be triumphant; that they frequently talked over old friends of Stepney, and regretted that the distance between them was so great—though distance, she added kindly, cannot divide hearts; and that, if Mrs. Bormalack's party would come over together and dine with them, it would be taken as a great kindness, both by herself and by his lordship. She added that she hoped they would all come, including Mr. Fagg and old Mr. Maliphant, and Mr. Josephus, 'though,' she added with a little natural touch, 'I doubt whether Mr. Maliphant ever gave me a thought; and Mr. Josephus was always too much occupied with his own misfortunes to mind any business of mine. And, dear Mrs. Bormalack, please remember that when we speak of dinner we mean what you call supper. It is exactly the same thing, only served a little earlier. We take ours at eight o'clock instead of nine. His lordship desires me to add that he shall be extremely disappointed if Mr. Goslett does not come; and you will tell Miss Kennedy, whose kindness I can never forget, the same from me, and that she must bring Nelly and Rebekah and Captain Sorensen.'

The letter was received with great admiration. Josephus, who had blossomed into a completely new suit of clothes of juvenile cut, declared that the invitation did her ladyship great credit, and that now his misfortunes were finished he should be rejoiced to take his place in society. Harry laughed, and said that of course he would go. 'And you, Miss Kennedy?'

Angela coloured. Then she said that she would try to go.

'And if Mr. Maliphant and Daniel only go too,' said Harry, 'we shall be as delightful a party as were ever gathered together at one dinner-table.'

It happened that about this time Lord Jocelyn remembered the American claimants, and his promise to call upon them. He therefore called, and was received with the greatest cordiality by her little ladyship, and with wondrous affability, as becomes one man of rank towards another, by Lord Davenant.

It was her ladyship who volubly explained their claim to him, and the certainty of the assumption that their Timothy Clitheroe was the lost heir of the same two Christian names: her husband only folded his fat hands over each other, and from time to time wagged his head.

'You are the first of my husband's brother peers,' she said, 'who has called upon us. We shall not forget this kindness from your lordship.'

'But I am not a peer at all,' he explained; 'I am only a younger son with a courtesy title. I am quite a small personage.'

'Which makes it all the kinder,' said her ladyship; 'and I must say that, grand as it is in this big house, one does get tired of hearin' no voice but your own—and my husband spends a good deal of his time in the study. Oh! a man of great literary attainments, and a splendid mathematician. I assure your lordship not a man or a boy in Canaan City can come near him in algebra.'

'Up to a certain point, Clara Martha,' said her husband, meaning that there might be lofty heights in science to which even he himself could not soar. 'Quadratic equations, my lord.'

Lord Jocelyn made an original remark about the importance of scientific pursuits.

'And since you are so friendly,' continued her ladyship,' 'I will venture to invite your lordship to dine with us.'

'Certainly. I shall be greatly pleased.'

'We have got a few friends coming to-morrow evening,' said her ladyship, rather grandly. 'Friends from Whitechapel.'

Lord Jocelyn looked curious.

'Yes, Mr. Josephus Coppin and his cousin Mr. Goslett, a sprightly young man who respects rank.'

'He is coming, is he?' asked Lord Jocelyn, laughing.

'And then there is Miss Kennedy——'

'She is coming too?' He rose with alacrity. 'Lady Davenant, I shall be most happy to come, I assure you.'

It was most unfortunate that next day Miss Kennedy had such a dreadful headache, that she found herself prevented from going with the rest. This was a great disappointment, and at the last moment old Mr. Maliphant could not be found, and they had to start without him.

How they performed the journey, how Harry managed to let most of the party go on before, because of his foolish pride, which would not let him form one of a flock all going out together, and how he with Captain Sorensen and Nelly came on after the rest, may be passed over.

When he got to Portman Square, he found the first detachment already arrived, and, to his boundless astonishment, his guardian. Lady Davenant, arrayed in her black velvet and the jewels which Angela gave her, looked truly magnificent. Was it possible, Mrs. Bormalack thought, that such a transformation could be effected in a woman by a velvet gown? She even looked tall. She received her friends with unaffected kindness, and introduced them all to Lord Jocelyn.

'Mrs. Bormalack, your lordship, my former landlady, and always my very good friend. Professor Climo, your lordship, the famous conjurer. And I'm sure the way he makes things disappear makes you believe in magic. Mr. Fagg, the great scholar; of whom, perhaps, your lordship has heard. Mr. Josephus Coppin, who has been unfortunate.' Lord Jocelyn wondered what that meant. 'Miss Rebekah Hermitage, whose father is minister of the Seventh Day Independents, and a most respectable Connection, though small in number. Captain Sorensen, your lordship, who comes from the Trinity almshouse, and Nelly his daughter: and Mr. Goslett. And I think that is all; and the sooner they let us have dinner the better.'

Lord Jocelyn shook hands with everybody. When it came to Harry, he laughed, and they both laughed, but they did not say why.

'And where is Miss Kennedy?' asked her ladyship. And there were great lamentations. 'I wanted your lordship to see Miss Kennedy. Oh, there's nobody like Miss Kennedy, is there, Nelly?'

'Nobody,' said Nelly. 'There can be nobody like Miss Kennedy.' Lord Jocelyn was struck with the beauty of this girl, whom he remembered seeing at the Dressmakery. He began to hope that she would sit next to him at dinner.

'Nobody half so beautiful in all Stepney, is there?'

'Nobody half so good,' said Rebekah.

Then the dinner was announced, and there was confusion in going down, because nobody would go before Lord Jocelyn, who, therefore, had to lead the way. Lord Davenant offered his arm to Mrs. Bormalack, Harry to Nelly, and Captain Sorensen to Rebekah. The Professor, Mr. Fagg, and Josephus came last.

'To be sure,' said Mrs. Bormalack, looking about her, thankful that she had put on her best cap, 'magnificence was expected, as was your lordship's due, but such as this—no, young man, I never take soup unless I've made it myself, and am quite sure—such as this, my lord, we did not expect.'

She was splendid in her beautiful best cap, all ribbons and bows, with an artificial dahlia in it of a far-off fashion—say, the Forties; the sight of the table, with its plate and flowers and fruit, filled her with admiration, but, as she now says, in recalling that stupendous feed, there was too much ornament, which kept her mind off the cooking, so that she really carried away no new ideas for Stepney use. Nelly did sit next to Lord Jocelyn, who talked with her, and found that she was shy until he touched upon Miss Kennedy. Then she waxed eloquent, and told him marvels, forgetting that he was a stranger who probably knew and cared nothing about Miss Kennedy. But Nelly belonged to that very numerous class which believes its own affairs of the highest interest to the world at large, and in this instance Miss Kennedy was a subject of the deepest interest to her neighbours. Wherefore he listened while she told what had been done for the workgirls by one woman, one of themselves.

Opposite, on Lady Davenant's left, sat Captain Sorensen. In the old days the captains of East Indiamen were not unacquainted with great men's tables, but it was long since he had sat at such a feast. Presently Lord Jocelyn began to look at him curiously.

'Who is the old gentleman opposite?' he whispered to Nelly.

'That is my father; he was a Captain once, and commanded a great ship.'

'I thought so,' said Lord Jocelyn. 'I remember him, but he has forgotten me.'

Next to the Captain sat Rebekah, looking prepared for any fate, and not unduly uplifted by the splendour of the scene. But for her, as well as for nearly all who were present, the word dinner will henceforth have a new and exalted meaning. The length of the feast, the number of things offered, the appointments of the table, struck her imagination; she thought of Belshazzar and of Herod; such as the feast before her were those feasts of old: she tasted the champagne, and it took away her breath; yet it seemed good. Mr. Goslett seemed to think so too, because he drank so many glasses.

So did the others, and, being unexperienced in wine, they drank with more valour than discretion, so that they began to talk loud; but that was not till later.

'Do people—rich people—always dine like this?' asked Nelly of her neighbour.

'Something like this; yes; that is, some such dinner, though simpler, is always prepared for them.'

'I was thinking,' she said, 'how differently people live. I would rather live in our way—with Miss Kennedy—than in so much grandeur.'

'Grandeur soon becomes a matter of habit. But as for Miss Kennedy, you cannot live always with her, can you?'

'Why not?'

'Well, she may marry, you know.'

Nelly looked across the table at Harry.

'I suppose she will; we all of us hope she will, if it is to stay with us; but that need not take her away from us.'

'Do you know Miss Messenger?'

'No,' said Nelly; 'she has been very kind to us; she is our best customer; she sends us all sorts of kind messages, and presents even; and she sends us her love and best wishes; I think she must be very fond of Miss Kennedy. She promises to come some day and visit us. Whenever I think of Miss Messenger, I think, somehow, that she must be like Miss Kennedy; only I cannot understand Miss Kennedy being rich and the owner of a great house.'

When the ladies retired, at length, it became manifest that Josephus had taken more wine than was good for him. He laughed loudly; he told everybody that he was going to begin all over again, classes and lectures and everything, including the Sunday school and the church membership. The Professor, who, for his part, seemed indisposed for conversation, retained the mastery over his fingers, and began to prepare little tricks, and presently conveyed oranges into Lord Davenant's coat tails without moving from his chair. And Daniel Fagg, whose cheek was flushed, and whose eyes were sparkling, rose from his chair and attacked Lord Jocelyn, note-book in hand.

'Is your lo'ship,' he began, with a perceptible thickness of speech—Lord Jocelyn recognised him as the man whom he had assisted at Stepney Green, and who subsequently took dinner with the girls—'is your lo'ship int'rested in Hebrew schriptions?'

'Very much indeed,' said Lord Jocelyn, politely.

''Low me to put your lo'ship's name down for schription, twelve-and-six? Book will come out next month, Miss Ken'dy says so.'

'Put up your book, Daniel,' said Harry sternly, 'and sit down.'

'I want—show—his lo'ship—a Hebrew schription.'

He sat down, however, obediently, and immediately fell fast asleep.

Said Lord Jocelyn to Captain Sorensen,—

'I remember you, Captain, very well indeed, but you have forgotten me. Were you not in command of the "Sussex" in the year of the Mutiny? Did you not take me out with the 120th?'

'To be sure—to be sure I did; and I remember your lordship very well, and am very glad to find you remember me. You were younger then.'

'I was; and how goes it with you now, Captain? Cheerfully as of old?'

'Ay, ay, my lord. I'm in the Trinity Almshouse, and my daughter is with Miss Kennedy, bless her! Therefore I've nothing to complain of.'

'May I call upon you, some day, to talk over old times? You used to sing a good song in those days, and play a good tune, and dance a good dance.'

'Come, my lord, as often as you like,' he replied in great good humour. 'The cabin is small, but it's cosy, and the place is hard to get at.'

'It is the queerest dinner I ever had, Harry,' Lord Jocelyn whispered. 'I like your old Captain and his daughter. Is the hard-hearted dressmaker prettier than Nelly?'

'Prettier! why, there is no comparison possible.'

'Yet Nelly hath a pleasing manner.'

'Miss Kennedy turns all her girls into ladies. Come and see her.'

'Perhaps, Harry, perhaps; when she is no longer hard-hearted; when she has named the happy day.'

'This evening,' said Lady Davenant, when they joined her, 'will be one that I never can forget. For I've had my old friends round me, who were kind in our poverty and neglect; and now I've your lordship too, who belongs to the new time. So that it is a joining together, as it were, and one don't feel like stepping out of our place into another quite different, as I shall tell Aurelia, who says she is afraid that splendour may make me forget old friends; whereas there is nobody I should like to have with us this moment better than Aurelia. But perhaps she judges others by herself.'

'Lor!' cried Mrs. Bormalack, 'to hear your ladyship go on! It's like an angel of goodness.'

'And the only thing that vexes me—it's enough to spoil it all—is that Miss Kennedy couldn't come. Ah! my lord, if you had only seen Miss Kennedy! Rebekah and Nelly are two good girls and pretty, but you are not to compare with Miss Kennedy—are you, dears?'

They both shook their heads and were not offended.

It was past eleven when they left to go home in cabs: one contained the sleeping forms of Josephus and Mr. Fagg; the next contained Captain Sorensen and Nelly, with Harry. The Professor, who had partly revived, came with Mrs. Bormalack and Rebekah in the last.

'You seemed to know Lord Jocelyn, Mr. Goslett,' said the Captain.

'I ought to,' replied Harry simply; 'he gave me my education.'

'He was always a brave and generous officer, I remember,' the Captain went on. 'Yes, I remember him well; all the men would have followed him everywhere. Well, he says he will come and see me.'

'Then he will come,' said Harry, 'if he said so.'

'Very good; if he comes, he shall see Miss Kennedy too.'

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE END OF THE CASE.

THIS dinner, to which her ladyship will always look back with the liveliest satisfaction, was the climax, the highest point, so to speak, of her greatness, which was destined to have a speedy fall. Angela asked Lord Jocelyn to read through the papers and advise. She told him of the Professor's discovery, and of the book which had belonged to the wheelwright, and everything.

Of course, the opinion which he formed was exactly that formed by Angela herself, and he told her so.

'I have asked them to my house,' Angela wrote, 'because I want them to go home to their own people with pleasant recollections of their stay in London. I should like them to feel, not that their claim had broken down, and that they were defeated, but that it had been examined, and was held to be not proven. I should be very sorry if I thought that the little lady would cease to believe in her husband's illustrious descent. Will you help me to make her keep her faith as far as possible, and go home with as little disappointment as possible?'

'I will try,' said Lord Jocelyn.

He wrote to Lady Davenant that he had given careful consideration to the Case, and had taken opinions, which was also true, because he made a lawyer, a herald, and a peer all read the documents, and write him a letter on the subject. He dictated all three letters, it is true; but there is generally something to conceal in this world of compromises.

He went solemnly to Portman Square bearing these precious documents with him. To Lady Davenant his opinion was the most important step which had yet occurred in the history of the claim: she placed her husband in the hardest arm-chair that she could find, with strict injunctions to keep broad awake; and she had a great array of pens and paper laid out on the table in order to look business-like. It must be owned that the good feeding of the last two months, with carriage exercise, had greatly increased his lordship's tendency to sleep and inaction. As for the Case, he had almost ceased to think of it. The Case meant worry, copying out, writing and re-writing, hunting up facts, and remembering; when the Case was put away he could give up his mind to breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Never had the present moment seemed so delightful to him.

Lord Jocelyn wore an expression of great gravity, as befitted the occasion. In fact, he was entrusted with an exceedingly delicate mission: he had to tell these worthy people that there was not the slightest hope for them: to recommend them to go home again; and though the counsel would be clothed in sugared words, to renounce for ever the hope of proving their imaginary claim. But it is better to be told these things kindly and sympathetically, by a man with a title, than by any coarse or common lawyer.

'Before I begin'—Lord Jocelyn addressed himself to the lady instead of her husband—'I would ask if you have any relic at all of that first Timothy Clitheroe who is buried in your cemetery at Canaan City?'

'There is a book,' said her ladyship. 'Here it is.'

She handed him a little book of songs, roughly bound in leather; on the title-page was written at the top 'Satturday,' and at the bottom 'Davvenant.'

Lord Jocelyn laid the book down and opened his case.

First, he reminded them that Miss Messenger in her first letter had spoken of a possible moral, rather than legal, triumph; of a possible failure to establish the claim before a committee of the House of Peers to whom it would be referred. This, in his opinion, was the actual difficulty: he had read the Case as it had been carefully drawn up and presented by his lordship—and he complimented the writer upon his lucid and excellent style of drawing up of facts—and he had submitted the Case for the opinion of friends of his own, all of them gentlemen eminently proper to form and to express an opinion on such a subject. He held the opinions of these gentlemen in his hands. One of them was from Lord de Lusignan, a nobleman of very ancient descent. His lordship wrote that there were very strong grounds for supposing it right to investigate a case which presented, certainly, very remarkable coincidences, if nothing more: that further investigations ought to be made on the spot; and that, if this Timothy Clitheroe Davenant turned out to be the lost heir, it would be another romance in the history of the Peerage. And his lordship concluded by a kind expression of hope that more facts would be discovered in support of the claim.

'You will like to keep this letter,' said the reader, giving it to Lady Davenant. She was horribly pale and trembled, because it seemed as if everything was slipping from her.

'The other letters,' Lord Jocelyn went on, 'are to the same effect. One is from a lawyer of great eminence, and the other is from a herald. You will probably like to keep them too, when I have read them.'

Lady Davenant took the letters, which were cruel in their kindness, and the tears came into her eyes.

Lord Jocelyn went on to say that researches made in their interest in the parish registers had resulted in a discovery which might even be made into an argument against the claim. There was a foundling child baptised in the church in the same year as the young heir; he received the name of the village with the day of the week on which he was found for Christian name; that is to say, he was called Saturday Davenant.

Then, indeed, his lordship became very red, and her ladyship turned still paler, and both looked guilty. Saturday Davenant! the words in the book. Suppose they were not a date and a name, but a man's whole name instead!

'He left the parish,' said Lord Jocelyn, 'and was reported to have gone to America.'

Neither of them spoke. His lordship looked slowly around the room, as if expecting that everything, even the solid mahogany of the library shelves, would vanish suddenly away. And he groaned, thinking of the dinners which would soon be things of the golden past.

'But, my friends,' Lord Jocelyn went on, 'do not be downcast. There is always the possibility of new facts turning up. Your grandfather's name may have been really Timothy Clitheroe, in which case I have very little doubt that he was the missing heir; but he may, on the other hand, have been the Saturday Davenant, in which case he lived and died with a lie on his lips, which one would be sorry to think possible.'

'Well, sir—if that is so—what do you advise that we should do now?' asked the grandson of this mystery. He seemed to have become an American citizen again, and to have shaken off the aristocratic manner.

'What I should advise is this. You will never, most certainly never, get recognition of your claim without stronger evidence than you at present offer. On the other hand, no one will refuse to admit that you have a strong case. Therefore I would advise you to go home to your own people, to tell them what has happened—how your case was taken up and carefully considered by competent authorities'—here he named again the lawyer, the herald, and the peer—'to show them their opinions, and to say that you have come back for further evidence, if you can find any, which will connect you beyond a doubt with the lost heir.'

'That is good advice, sir,' said the claimant. 'No, Clara Martha, for once I will have my own way. The connection is the weak point; we must go home and make it a strong point, else we had better stay there. I said, all along, that we ought not to have come. Nevertheless, I'm glad we came, Clara Martha. I sha'n't throw it in your teeth that we did come. I'm grateful to you for making us come. We've made good friends here, and seen many things which we shouldn't otherwise have seen. And the thought of this house and the meals we've had in it—such breakfasts, such luncheons, such dinners—will never leave us, I am sure.'

Lady Davenant could say nothing. She saw everything torn from her at a rough blow—her title, her consideration, the envy of her fellow-citizens, especially of Aurelia Tucker. She put her handkerchief to her eyes and sobbed aloud.

'You should not go back as if you were defeated,' Lord Jocelyn went on in sympathy with the poor little woman. 'You are as much entitled to the rank you claim as ever. More: your case has been talked about; it is known: should any of the antiquaries who are always grubbing about parish records find any scrap of information which may help, he will make a note of it for you. When you came you were friendless and unknown. Now the press of England has taken you up: your story is romantic: we are all interested in you, and desirous of seeing you succeed. Before you go you will write to the papers stating why you go, and what you hope to find. All these letters and papers and proofs of the importance of your claim should be kept and shown to your friends.'

'We feel mean about going back, and that's a fact,' said his lordship. 'Still, if we must go back, why, we'd better go back with drums and trumpets than sneak back——'

'Ah!' said his wife, 'if you'd only shown that spirit from the beginning, Timothy!'

He collapsed.

'If we go back,' she continued thoughtfully, 'I suppose there's some sort of work we can find, between us. Old folks hadn't ought to work like the young, and I'm sixty-five, and so is my husband. But——

She stopped, with a sigh.

'I am empowered by Miss Messenger,' Lord Jocelyn went on, with great softness of manner, 'to make you a little proposition. She thinks that it would be most desirable for you to have your hands free while you make those researches which may lead to the discoveries we hope for. Now, if you have to waste the day in work you will never be able to make any research. Therefore Miss Messenger proposes—if you do not mind—if you will accept

—an annuity on your joint lives of six hundred dollars. You may be thus relieved of all anxiety about your personal wants. And Miss Messenger begs only that you may let this annuity appear the offering of sympathising English friends.'

'But we don't know Miss Messenger,' said her ladyship.

'Has she not extended her hospitality to you for two months and more? Is not that a proof of the interest she takes in you?'

'Certainly it is. Why—see now—we've been living here so long, that we've forgotten it is all Miss Messenger's gift.'

'Then, you will accept?'

'Oh, Lord Jocelyn, what can we do but accept?'

'And with grateful hearts,' added his lordship. 'Tell her that. With grateful hearts. They've a way of serving quail in her house, that——' He stopped and sighed.

. . . . . .

They have returned to Canaan City; they live in simple sufficiency. His lordship, when he is awake, has many tales to tell of London. His friends believe Stepney Green to be a part of May-fair, and Mrs. Bormalack to be a distinguished though untitled ornament of London society; while as for Aurelia Tucker, who fain would scoff, there are her ladyship's beautiful and costly dresses, and her jewels, and the letters from Lord Jocelyn Le Breton and the rich Miss Messenger, and the six hundred dollars a year drawn monthly, which proclaim aloud that there is something in the claim.

These are things which cannot be gainsaid.

Nevertheless, no new discoveries have yet rewarded his lordship's researches.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE PALACE OF DELIGHT.

During this time the Palace of Delight was steadily rising. Before Christmas its walls were completed and the roof on. Then began the painting, the decorating, and the fittings. And Angela was told that the building would be handed over to her, complete according to the contract, by the first of March.

The building was hidden away, so to speak, in a corner of vast Stepney, but already rumours were abroad concerning it, and the purpose for which it was erected. They were conflicting rumours. No one knew at all what was intended by it; no one had been within the walls; no one knew who built it. The place was situated so decidedly in the very heart and core of Stepney, that the outside public knew nothing at all about it, and the rumours were confined to the small folk round it. So it rose in their midst without being greatly regarded. No report or mention of it came to Harry's ears, so that he knew nothing of it, and suspected nothing, any more than he suspected Miss Kennedy of being some other person.

The first of March in this present year of grace 1882 fell upon a Wednesday. Angela resolved that the opening day should be on Thursday, the second, and that she would open it herself: and then another thought came into her mind; and the longer she meditated upon it, the stronger hold did the idea take upon her.

The Palace of Delight was not, she said, her own conception: it was that of the man—the man she loved. Would it not be generous, in giving this place over to the people for whom it was built, to give its real founder the one reward which he asked?

Never any knight of old had been more loyal: he obeyed in the spirit as well as the letter her injunction not to speak of love, not only did he refrain from those good words which he would fain have uttered, but he showed no impatience, grumbled not, had no fits of sulking: he waited, patient. And in all other things he did her behest, working with a cheerful heart for her girls, always ready to amuse them, always at her service for things great and small, and meeting her mood with a ready sympathy.

One evening, exactly a fortnight before the proposed opening day, Angela invited all the girls and, with them, her faithful old Captain, and her servant Harry, to follow her, because she had a Thing to show them. She spoke with great seriousness, and looked overcome with the gravity of this Thing. What was she going to show them?

They followed, wondering, while she led the way to the church, and then turned to the right among the narrow lanes of a part where, by some accident, none of the girls belonged.

Presently she stopped before a great building. It was not lit up, and seemed quite dark and empty. Outside, the planks were not yet removed, and they were covered with gaudy advertisements, but it was too dark to see them. There was a broad porch above the entrance, with a generously ample ascent of steps like unto those of St. Paul's Cathedral. Angela rang a bell and the door was opened. They found themselves in an entrance hall of some kind, imperfectly lighted by a single gas jet. There were three or four men standing about, apparently waiting for them, because one stepped forward, and said,—

'Miss Messenger's party?'

'We are Miss Messenger's party,' Angela replied.

'Whoever we are,' said Harry, 'we are a great mystery to ourselves.'

'Patience,' Angela whispered. 'Part of the mystery is going to be cleared up.'

'Light up, Bill,' said one of the men.

Then the whole place passed suddenly into daylight, for it was lit by the electric globes.

It was a lofty vestibule. On either side were cloak-rooms:

opposite were entrance doors. But what was on the other side of these entrance-rooms none of them could guess.

'My friend,' said Angela to Harry, 'this place should be yours. It is of your creation.'

'What is it, then?'

'It is your Palace of Delight. Yes: nothing short of that. Will you lead me into your Palace?'

She took his arm, while he marvelled greatly, and asked himself what this might mean. One of the men then opened the doors, and they entered, followed by the wondering girls.

They found themselves in a lofty and very spacious hall. At the end was a kind of throne—a red velvet divan, semicircular under a canopy of red velvet. Statues stood on either side: behind them was a great organ: upon the walls were pictures. Above the pictures were trophies in arms, tapestry carpets, all kinds of beautiful things. Above the entrance was a gallery for musicians; and on either side were doors leading to places of which they knew nothing.

Miss Kennedy led the way to the semicircular divan at the end. She took the central place, and motioned the girls to arrange themselves about her. The effect of this little group sitting by themselves and in silence at the end of the great hall was very strange and wonderful.

'My dears,' she said after a moment—and the girls saw that her eyes were full of tears—'my dears, I have got a wonderful story to tell you. Listen.

'There was a girl, once, who had the great misfortune to be born rich. It is a thing which many people desire. She, however, who had it, knew what a misfortune it might become to her. For the possessor of great wealth, more especially if it be a woman, attracts all the designing and wicked people in the world, all the rogues and all the pretended philanthropists to her, as wasps are attracted by honey; and presently, by sad experience, she gets to look on all mankind as desirous only of robbing and deceiving her. This is a dreadful condition of mind to fall into, because it stands in the way of love and friendship and trust, and all the sweet confidences which make us happy.

'This girl's name was Messenger. Now, when she was quite young she knew what was going to happen, unless she managed somehow differently from other women in her unhappy position. And she determined as a first step to get rid of a large quantity of her wealth, so that the cupidity of the robbers might be diverted.

'Now, she had a humble friend—only a dressmaker—who, for reasons of her own, loved her, and would have served her if she could. And this dressmaker came to live at the East End of London.

'And she saw that the girls who have to work for their bread are treated in such a way that slavery would be a better lot for most of them. For they have to work twelve hours in the day, and sometimes more: they sit in close, hot rooms, poisoned by gas: they get no change of position as the day goes on: they have no holiday, no respite, save on Sunday: they draw miserable wages, and they are indifferently fed. So that she thought one good thing Miss Messenger could do was to help those girls; and this was how our Association was founded.'

'But we shall thank you, all the same,' said Nelly.

'Then another thing happened. There was a young—gentleman,' Angela went on, 'staying at the East End too. He called himself a working man, said he was the son of a Sergeant in the army, but everybody knew he was a gentleman. This dressmaker made his acquaintance, and talked with him a great deal. He was full of ideas, and one day he proposed that we should have a Palace of Delight. It would cost a great deal of money; but they talked as if they had that sum, and more, at their disposal. They arranged it all: they provided for everything. When the scheme was fully drawn up, the dressmaker took it to Miss Messenger. Oh, my dear girls! this *is* the Palace of Delight. It is built as they proposed; it is finished; it is our own; and here is its inventor.'

She took Harry's hand. He stood beside her, gazing upon her impassioned face; but he was silent. 'It looks cold and empty now, but when you see it on the opening day; when you come here night after night; when you get to feel the place to be a part, and the best part, of your life, then remember that what Miss Messenger did was nothing compared with what this—this young gentleman did. For he invented it.'

'Now,' she said, rising—they were all too much astonished to make any demonstration—'now let us examine the building. This Hall is your great Reception Room. You will use it for the ball nights, when you give your great dances: a thousand couples may dance here without crowding. On wet days it is to be the playground of the children. It will hold a couple of thousand, without jostling against each other. There is the gallery for the music, as soon as you have got any.'

She led the way to a door on the right.

'This,' she said, 'is your Theatre.'

It was like a Roman theatre, being built in the form of a semicircle, tier above tier, having no distinction in places, save that some were nearer the stage and some farther off.

'Here,' she said, 'you will act. Do not think that players will be found for you. If you want a theatre you must find your own actors. If you want an orchestra you must find your own for your theatre, because in this place everything will be done by yourselves.'

They came out of the Theatre. There was one other door on that side of the Hall.

'This,' said Angela, opening it, 'is the Concert Room. It has an organ and a piano and a platform. When you have got people who can play and sing you will give concerts.'

They crossed the Hall. On the other side were two more great rooms, each as big as the Theatre and the Concert Room. One was a gymnasium, fitted up with bars and ropes and parallel rods and trapezes.

'This is for the young men,' said Angela. 'They will be stimulated by prizes to become good gymnasts. The other room is the Library. Here they may come, when they please, to read and study.'

It was a noble room, fitted with shelves and the beginning of a great library.

'Let us go upstairs,' said Angela.

Upstairs the rooms were all small, but there were a great many of them.

Thus there were billiard-rooms, card-rooms, rooms with chess, dominoes, and backgammon tables laid out, smoking-rooms for men alone, tea and coffee rooms, rooms where women could sit by themselves if they pleased, and a room where all kinds of refreshments were to be procured. Above these was a second floor, which was called the School. This consisted of a great number of quite small rooms, fitted with desks, tables, and whatever else might be necessary. Some of these rooms were called music-rooms, and were intended for instruction and practice on different instruments. Others were for painting, drawing, sculpture, modelling, wood-carving, leather-work, brasswork, embroidery, lacework, and all manner of small arts.

'In the Palace of Delight,' said Angela, 'we shall not be like a troop of revellers, thinking of nothing but dance and song and feasting. We shall learn something every day; we shall all belong to some class. Those of us who know already will teach the rest. And oh! the best part of all has to be told. Everything in the Palace will be done for nothing, except the mere cleaning and keeping in order. And if anybody is paid anything, it will be at the rate of a working man's wage—no more. For this is our own Palace, the club of the working people; we will not let anybody make money out of it: we shall use it for ourselves, and we shall make our enjoyment by ourselves.

'All this is provided in the deed of trust by which Miss Messenger hands over the building to the people. There are three trustees. One of these, of course, is you—Mr. Goslett.'

'I have been so lost in amazement,' said Harry, 'that I have been unable to speak. Is this, in very truth, the Palace of Delight that we have battled over so long and so often?'

'It is none other. And you are a trustee to carry out the intentions of the founder—yourself.'

They went downstairs again to the great Hall.

'Captain Sorensen,' Angela whispered, 'will you go home with the girls? I will follow in a few minutes.'

Harry and Angela were left behind in the Hall.

She called the man in charge of the electric light, and said something to him. Then he went away and turned down the light, and they were standing in darkness, save for the bright moon which shone through the windows and fell upon the white statues and made them look like two ghosts themselves standing among rows of other ghosts.

'Harry,' said Angela.

'Do not mock me,' he replied, 'I am in a dream. This is not real. The place——'

'It is your own Palace of Delight. It will be given to the people in a fortnight. Are you pleased with your creation?'

'Pleased? And you?'

'I am greatly pleased. Harry'—it was the first time she had called him by his Christian name,—'I promised you—I promised I would tell you—I would tell you—if the time should come——'

'Has the time come? Oh, my dear love, has the time come?'

'There is nothing in the way. But oh!—Harry—are you in the same mind? No—wait a moment.' She held him by the wrists; 'Remember what you are doing. Will you choose a lifetime of work among working people? You can go back, now, to your old life; but—perhaps—you will not be able to go back, then.'

'I have chosen, long ago. You know my choice—oh! love—my love.'

'Then, Harry, if it will make you happy—are you quite sure it will?—you shall marry me on the day when the Palace is opened.'

. . . . . .

'You are sure,' she said presently, 'that you can love me, though I am only a dressmaker?'

'Could I love you,' he replied passionately, 'if you were anything else?'

. . . . . .

'You have never told me,' he said presently, 'your Christian name.'

'It is Angela.'

'Angela! I should have known it could have been no other. Angela, kind Heaven, surely, sent you down to stay awhile with me. If in time to come you should be ever unhappy with me, dear, if you should not be able to bear any longer with my faults, you would leave me and go back to the heaven whence you came.'

. . . . . .

They parted, that night, on the steps of Mrs. Bormalack's dingy old boarding-house, to both so dear. But Harry, for half the night, paced the pavement, trying to calm the tumult of his thoughts. 'A life of work—with Angela—with Angela? Why, how small, how pitiful seemed all other kinds of life in which Angela was not concerned!'

CHAPTER XLVIII.

MY LADY SWEET.

My story, alas! has come to an end, according to the nature of all earthly things. The love vows are exchanged, the girl has given herself to the man—rich or poor. My friends, if you come to think of it, no girl is so rich that she can give more, or so poor that she can give less, than herself; and in love one asks not for more or less. Even the day is appointed, and nothing is going to happen which will prevent the blessed wedding bells from ringing, or the clergyman from the sacred joining together of man and of maid, till death do part them. What more to tell? We ought to drop the curtain while the moonlight pours through the windows of the silent Palace upon the lovers, while the gods and goddesses, nymphs, naiads, and oreads in marble look on in sympathetic joy. They, too, in the far-off ages, among the woods and springs of Hellas, lived and loved, though their forests know them no more. Yet, because this was no ordinary marriage, and because we are sorry to part with Angela before the day when she begins her wedded life, we must fain tell of what passed in that brief fortnight before the Palace was opened, and Angela's great and noble dream became a reality.

There was, first of all, a greal deal of business to be set in order. Angela had interviews with her lawyers, and settlements had to be drawn up about which Harry knew nothing, though he would have to sign them; then there were the trust deeds for the Palace. Angela named Harry, Dick Coppin, the old Chartist, now her firm and fast friend, and Lord Jocelyn, as joint trustees. They were to see, first of all, that no one got anything out of the Palace unless it might be workmen's wages for work done. They were to carry out the spirit of the house in making the place support and feed itself, so that whatever amusements, plays, dances, interludes, or mummeries, were set afoot, all might be by the people themselves for themselves; and they were to do their utmost to keep out the discordant elements of politics, religion, and party controversy.

All the girls knew by this time that Miss Kennedy was to be married on the second of March—the day when the Palace was to be opened. They also learned, because the details were arranged and talked over every evening, that the opening would be on a very grand scale indeed. Miss Messenger herself was coming to hand it over in person to the trustees on behalf of the people of Stepney and Whitchapel. There was to be the acting of a play in the new theatre, a recital on the new organ, the performance of a concert in the new concert-room, playing all the evening long by a military band, some sort of general entertainment, and the whole was to be terminated by a gigantic supper given by Miss Messenger herself, to which fifteen hundred guests were bidden; namely, first, all the employés of the brewery with their wives, if they had any, from the Chief Brewer and the Chief Accountant down to the humblest boy on the establishment; and secondly, all the girls of the Association, with two or three guests for each; and thirdly, a couple of hundred or so chosen from a list drawn up by Dick Coppin and the cobbler and Harry.

As for Harry, he had now, by Angela's recommendation, resigned his duties at the Brewery, in order to throw his whole time into the arrangement for the opening day; and this so greatly occupied him that he sometimes even forgot what the day would mean to him. The invitations were sent in Miss Messenger's own name. They were all accepted, although there was naturally some little feeling of irritation at the Brewery when it became known that there was to be a general sitting down of all together. Miss Messenger also expressed her wish that the only beverage at the supper should be Messenger's beer, and that of the best quality. The banquet, in imitation of the Lord Mayor's dinner on the ninth of November, was to be a cold one, and solid, with plenty of ices, jellies, puddings, and fruit. But there was something said about glasses of wine for every guest after supper.

'I suppose,' said Angela, talking over this pleasant disposition of things with Harry, 'that she means one or two toasts to be proposed. The first should be to the success of the Palace. The second, I think'—and she blushed—'will be the health of you, Harry, and of me.'

'I think so much of you,' said Harry, 'all day long, that I never think of Miss Messenger at all. Tell me what she is like, this giver and dispenser of princely gifts. I suppose she really is the owner of boundless wealth?'

'She has several millions, if you call that boundless. She has been a very good friend to me, and will continue so.'

'You know her well?'

'I know her very well. Oh, Harry, do not ask me any more about her or myself. When we are married I will tell you all about the friendship of Miss Messenger to me. You trust me, do you not?'

'Trust you! Oh, Angela!'

'My secret, such as it is, is not a shameful one, Harry; and it has to do with the very girl, this Miss Messenger. Leave me with it till the day of our wedding. I wonder how far your patience will endure my secrets? for here is another. You know that I have a little money?'

'I am afraid, my Angela,' said Harry, laughing, 'that you must have made a terrible hole in it since you came here. Little or much, what does it matter to us? Haven't we got the Two Thousand? Think of that tremendous lump.'

'What can it matter?' she cried. 'Oh, Harry, I thank Heaven for letting me, too, have this great gift of sweet and disinterested love. I thought it would never come to me.'

'To whom, then, should it come?'

'Don't, Harry, or—yes—go on thinking me all that you say, because it may help to make me all that you think. But that is not what I wanted to say. Would you mind very much, Harry, if I asked you to take my name?'

'I will take any name you wish, Angela. If I am your husband, what does it matter about any other name?'

'And then one other thing, Harry. Will your guardian give his consent?'

'Yes, I can answer for him that he will. And he will come to the wedding if I ask him.'

'Then ask him, Harry.'

. . . .

'So,' said Lord Jocelyn, 'the dressmaker has relented, has she? Why, that is well. And I am to give my consent? My dear boy, I only want you to be happy. Beside, I am quite sure and certain that you will be happy.'

'Everybody is, if he marries the woman he loves,' said the young man sententiously.

'Yes—yes, if he goes on loving the woman he has married. However, Harry, you have my best wishes and my consent, since you are good enough to ask for it. Wait a bit.' He got up and began to search about in drawers and desks. 'I must give your *fiancée* a present, Harry. See—here is something good. Will you give her, with my best love and good wishes, this? It was once my mother's.'

Harry looked at the gaud, set with pearls and rubies in old-fashioned style.

'Is it not,' he asked, 'rather too splendid for a—poor people in our position?'

Lord Jocelyn laughed aloud.

'Nothing,' he said, 'can be too splendid for a beautiful woman. Give it her, Harry, and tell her I am glad she has consented to make you happy. Tell her I am more than glad, Harry. Say that I most heartily thank her. Yes, thank her. Tell her that. Say that I thank her from my heart.'

As the day drew near the girls became possessed of a great fear. It seemed to all as if things were going to undergo some great and sudden change. They knew that the house was secured to them free of rent; but they were going to lose their queen, that presiding spirit who not only kept them together, but also kept them happy. In her presence there were no little tempers, and jealousies were forgotten. When she was with them they were all on their best behaviour. Now it is an odd thing in girls, and I really think myself privileged, considering my own very small experience of the sex, in being the first to have discovered this important truth—that, whereas to boys good behaviour is too often a *gêne* and a bore, girls prefer behaving well. They are happiest when they are good, nicely dressed, and sitting all in a row with company manners. But who, when Miss Kennedy went away, would lead them in the drawing-room? The change, however, was going to be greater than they knew or guessed; the drawing-room itself would become before many days a thing of the past, but the Palace would take its place.

They all brought gifts: they were simple things, but they were offered with willing and grateful hearts. Rebekah brought the one volume of her father's library which was well bound. It was a work written in imitation of Hervey's 'Meditations,' and dealt principally with tombs, and was therefore peculiarly appropriate as a wedding present. Nelly brought a ring which had been her mother's, and was so sacred to her that she felt it *must* be given to Miss Kennedy; the other girls gave worked handkerchiefs, and collars, and such little things.

Angela looked at the table on which she had spread all her wedding presents: the plated teapot, from Mrs. Bormalack; the girls' work; Nelly's ring; Rebekah's book; Lord Jocelyn's bracelet. She was happier with these trifles than if she had received in Portman Square the hundreds of gifts and jewelled things which would have poured in for the young heiress.

And in the short fortnight she thought for everybody. Josephus received a message that he might immediately retire on the pension which he would have received had he been fortunate in promotion, and compelled to go by ill-health: in other words, he was set free with three hundred pounds a year for life. He may now be seen any day in the Mile End Road or on Stepney Green, dressed in the fashion of a young man of twenty-one or so, walking with elastic step, because he is so young, yet manifesting a certain gravity, as becomes one who attends the evening lectures of the Beaumont Institute in French and arithmetic, and takes a class on the Sabbath in connection with the Wesleyan body. After all, a man is only as old as he feels; and why should not Josephus, whose youth was cruelly destroyed, feel young again, now that his honour has been restored to him?

On the morning before the wedding, Angela paid two visits of considerable importance.

The first was to Daniel Fagg, to whom she carried a small parcel. 'My friend,' she said, 'I have observed your impatience about your book. Your publisher thought that, as you are inexperienced in correcting proofs, it would be best to have the work done for you. And here, I am truly happy to say, is the book itself.'

He tore the covering from the book and seized it, as a mother would seize her child.

'My book!' he gasped, 'my book!'

Yes, his book; bound in sober cloth, with an equilateral triangle on the cover for simple ornament. 'The Primitive Alphabet. By Daniel Fagg.' 'My book!'

Angela explained to him that his passage to Melbourne was taken, and that he would sail in a week; and that a small sum of money would be put into his hands on landing: and that a hundred copies of the book would be sent to Australia for him, with more if he wanted them. But she talked to idle ears, for Daniel was turning over the leaves and devouring the contents of his book.

'At all events,' said Angela, 'I have made one man happy.'

Then she walked to the Trinity Almshouse, and sought her old friend Captain Sorensen.

To him she told her whole story from the very beginning, begging only that he would keep her secret till the next evening.

'But, of course,' said the sailor, 'I knew, all along, that you were a lady born and bred. You might deceive the folk here, who've no chance, poor things, of knowing a lady when they see one—how should they? But you could not deceive a man who's had his quarter-deck full of ladies. The only question in my mind was why you did it.'

'You did not think that what Bunker said was true—did you, Captain Sorensen?'

'Nay,' he replied. 'Bunker never liked you; and how I am to thank you enough for all you've done for my poor girl——'

'Thank me by continuing to be my dear friend and adviser,' said Angela. 'If I thought it would pleasure you to live out of this place——'

'No, no,' said the Captain, 'I could not take your money; any one may accept the provision of the asylum and be grateful.'

'I knew you would say so. Stay on, then, Captain Sorensen. And as regards Nelly, my dear and fond Nelly——'

It needs not to tell what she said and promised on behalf of Nelly.

And at the house the girls were trying on the new white frocks and white bonnets in which they were to go to the wedding. They were all bridesmaids, but Nelly had the post of honour.

CHAPTER XLIX.

'UPROUSE YE THEN, MY MERRY, MERRY MEN.'

At nine in the morning Harry presented himself at the house, no longer his own, for the signing of certain papers. The place was closed for a holiday, but the girls were already assembling in the show-room, getting their dresses laid out, trying on their gloves, and chattering like birds up in the branches on a fine spring morning. He found Angela sitting with an elderly gentleman—none other than the senior partner in the firm of her solicitors. He had a quantity of documents on the table before him, and as Harry opened the door he heard these remarkable words:—

'So the young man does not know—even at the eleventh hour!'

What it was he would learn, Harry cared not to inquire. He had been told that there was a secret of some sort which he would learn in the course of the day.

'These papers, Harry,' said his bride, 'are certain documents which you have to sign, connected with that little fortune of which I told you.'

'I hope,' said Harry, 'that the fortune, whatever it is, has been all settled upon yourself absolutely.'

'You will find young gentleman,' said the solicitor gravely, 'that ample justice—generous justice—has been done you. Very well, I will say no more.'

'Do you want me to sign without reading, Angela?'

'If you will so far trust me.'

He took the pen and signed where he was told to sign, without reading one word. If he had been ordered to sign away his life and liberty, he would have done so blindly and cheerfully at Angela's bidding. The deed was signed, and the act of signature was witnessed.

So that was done. There now remained only the ceremony. While the solicitor, who evidently disliked the whole proceeding, as irregular and dangerous, was putting up the papers, Angela took her lover's hands in hers, and looked into his face with her frank and searching look.

'You do not repent, my poor Harry?'

'Repent?'

'You might have done so much better: you might have married a lady——'

The solicitor, overhearing these words, sat down and rubbed his nose with an unprofessional smile.

'Shall I not marry a lady?'

'You might have found a rich bride: you might have led a lazy life, with nothing to do, instead of which—oh! Harry, there is still time. We are not due at the church for half an hour yet. Think. Do you deliberately choose a life of work and ambition—with—perhaps—poverty?'

At this point the solicitor rose from his chair and walked softly to the window, where he remained for five minutes looking out upon Stepney Green with his back to the lovers. If Harry had been watching him, he would have remarked a curious tremulous movement of the shoulders.

'There is one thing more, Harry, that I have to ask you.'

'Of course, you have only to ask me, whatever it is. Could I refuse you anything, who will give me so much?'

Their fingers were interlaced, their eyes were looking into each other. No; he could refuse her nothing.

'I give you much? Oh! Harry—what is a woman's gift of herself?'

Harry restrained himself. The solicitor might be sympathetic; but, on the whole, it was best to act as if he was not. Law has little to do with Love: Cupid has never yet been represented with the long gown.

'It is a strange request, Harry. It is connected with my—my little foolish secret. You will let me go away directly the service is over, and you will consent not to see me again until the evening, when I shall return. You, with all the girls, will meet me in the porch of the Palace at seven o'clock exactly. And, as Miss Messenger will come too, you will make your—perhaps your last appearance—my poor boy—in the character of a modern English gentleman in evening dress. Tell your best man that he is to give his arm to Nelly: the other girls will follow two and two. Oh, Harry, the first sound of the organ in your Palace will be your own Wedding March: the first festival in your Palace will be in your own honour. Is not that what it should be?'

'In your honour, dear, not mine. And Miss Messenger? Are we to give no honour to her who built the Palace?'

'Oh! yes—yes—yes.' She put the question by with a careless gesture. 'But anyone who happened to have the money could do such a simple thing. The honour is yours because you invented it.'

'From your hands, Angela, I will take all the honour that you please to give. So am I doubly honoured.'

. . . .

There were no wedding bells at all: the organ was mute: the Parish Church of Stepney was empty: the spectators of the marriage were Mrs. Bormalack and Captain Sorensen, besides the girls and the bridegroom, and Dick his best man. The Captain in the Salvation Army might have been present as well; he had been asked, but he was lying on the sick bed from which he was never to rise again. Lord and Lady Davenant were there: the former sleek, well contented, well dressed in broadcloth of the best; the latter agitated, restless, humiliated, because she had lost the thing she came across the Atlantic to claim, and was going home, after the splendour of the last three months, to the monotonous levels of Canaan City. Who could love Canaan City after the West End of London? What woman would look forward with pleasure to the dull and uneventful days, the local politics, the chapel squabbles, the little gatherings for tea and supper, after the enjoyment of a carriage and pair, and unlimited theatres, operas, and concerts, and footmen, and such dinners as the average American, or the average Englishman either, seldom arrives at seeing, even in visions? Sweet content was gone: and though Angela meant well, and it was kind of her to afford the ambitious lady a glimpse of that great world into which she desired to enter, the sight—even this Pisgah glimpse—of a social Paradise to which she could never belong, destroyed her peace of mind, and she will for the rest of her life lie on a rock deploring. Not so her husband: his future is assured; he can eat and drink plentifully; he can sleep all the morning undisturbed; he is relieved of the anxieties connected with his Case: and though the respect due to rank is not recognised in the States, he has to bear none of its responsibilities, and has altogether abandoned the Grand Manner. At the same time, as one who very nearly became a British Peer, his position in Canaan City is enormously raised.

They, then, were in the church. They drove thither, not in Miss Messenger's carriage, but with Lord Jocelyn.

They arrived a quarter of an hour before the ceremony. When the curate who was to perform the ceremony arrived, Lord Jocelyn sought him in the vestry and showed him a special licence by which it was pronounced lawful, and even laudable, for Harry Goslett, bachelor, to take unto wife Angela Marsden Messenger, spinster.

And at sight of that name did the curate's knees begin to tremble, and his hands to shake.

'Angela Marsden Messenger? Is it, then,' he asked, 'the great heiress?'

'It is none other,' said Lord Jocelyn. 'And she marries my ward—here is my card—by special licence.'

'But—but—is it a clandestine marriage?'

'Not at all. There are reasons why Miss Messenger desires to be married in Stepney. With them we have nothing to do. She has, of late, associated herself with many works of benevolence, but anonymously. In fact, my dear sir'—here Lord Jocelyn looked profoundly knowing—'my ward, the bridegroom, has always known her under another name, and even now does not know whom he is marrying. When we sign the books, we must, just to keep the secret a little longer, manage that he shall write his own name without seeing the names of the bride.'

This seemed very irregular in the eyes of the curate, and at first he was for referring the matter to the rector, but finally gave in, on the understanding that he was to be no party to any concealment.

And presently the wedding party walked slowly up the aisle, and Harry, to his great astonishment, saw his bride on Lord Jocelyn's arm. There were cousins of the Messengers in plenty who should have done this duty, but Angela would invite none of them. She came alone to Stepney; she lived and worked in the place alone; she wanted no consultation or discussion with the cousins; she would tell them when all was done; and she knew very well that so great an heiress as herself could do nothing but what is right, when one has time to recover from the shock, and to settle down and think things over.

No doubt, though we have nothing to do with the outside world in this story, there was a tremendous rustling of skirts, shaking of hands, tossing of curls, wagging of tongues, and uplifting of hands, the next morning when Angela's cards were received, and the news was in all the papers. And there was such a run upon interjections that the vocabulary broke down, and people were fain to cry to one another in foreign tongues.

For thus the announcement ran:—

'On Thursday, March 20, at the Parish Church, Stepney, Harry, son of the late Samuel Goslett, Sergeant in the 120th Regiment of the Line, to Angela Marsden, daughter of the late John Marsden Messenger, and granddaughter of the late John Messenger, of Portman Square and Whitechapel.'

This was a pretty blow among the cousins. The greatest heiress in England, whom they had hoped would marry a duke, or a marquis, or an earl at least, had positively and actually married the son of a common soldier—well, a non-commissioned officer—the same thing. What did it mean? What *could* it mean?

Others, who knew Harry and his story, who had sympathy with him on account of his many good qualities; who owned that the obscurity of his birth was but an accident shared with him by many of the most worthy, excellent, brilliant, useful, well-bred, delightful men of the world; rejoiced over the strange irony of Fate which had first lifted this soldier's son out of the gutter, and then, with apparent malignity, dropped him back again, only, however, to raise him once more far higher than before. For, indeed, the young man was now rich —with his vats and his mashtubs, his millions of casks, his Old and his Mild and his Bitter, and his Family at nine shillings the nine-gallon cask, and his accumulated millions, 'beyond the potential dream of avarice.' If he chooses to live more than half his time in Whitechapel, that is no concern of anybody's; and if his wife chooses to hold a sort of court at the abandoned East, to surround herself with people unheard of in society, not to say out of it, why should she not? Any of the Royal princes might have done the same thing if they had chosen and had been well advised. Further, if, between them, Angela and her husband have established a superior Aquarium, a glorified Crystal Palace, in which all the shows are open, all the performers are drilled and trained amateurs, and all the work actually is done for nothing; in which the management is by the people themselves, who will have no interference from priest or parson, rector or curate, philanthropist or agitator; and no patronage from societies, well-intentioned young ladies, meddling benevolent persons and officious promoters, starters, and shovers-along, with half an eye fixed on heaven and the remaining eye and a half on their own advancement; if, in fact, they choose to do these things, why not? It is an excellent way of spending their time, and a change from the monotony of society.

Again, it is said that Harry, now Harry Messenger, by the provision of old John Messenger's will, is the President, or the

Chairman, or the Honorary Secretary, in fact, the spring and stay and prop, of a new and most formidable Union or Association, which threatens, unless it be nipped in the bud, very considerable things of the greatest importance to the country. It is, in fact, a League of Working Men for the Promotion and Advancement of their own interests. Its Prospectus sets forth that, having looked in vain, among the candidates for the House of Commons, for any representative who had been in the past, or was likely to be in the future, of the slightest use to them in the House; having found that neither Conservatives, nor Liberals, nor Radicals, have ever been, or are ever likely to be, prepared with any real measure which should in the least concern themselves and their own wants; and fully recognising the fact that in the Debates of the House the interests of labour and the duties of Government towards the labouring classes are never recognised or understood; the working men of the country hereby form themselves into a General League or Union, which shall have no other object whatever than the study of their own rights and interests. The question of wages will be left to the different Unions, except in such cases where there is no Union, or where the men are inarticulate (as in the leading case, now some ten years old, of the gas stokers), through ignorance and drink. And the immediate questions before the Union will be, first, the dwelling-houses of the working men, which are to be made clean, safe, and healthy; next, their food and drink, which are to be unadulterated, pure, and genuine, and are to pass through no more hands than is necessary, and to be distributed at the actual cost price without the intervention of small shops; next, instruction, for which purpose the working men will *elect their own School Boards*, and burn all the foolish reading books at present in use, and abolish spelling as a part of education, and teach the things necessary for all trades; next, clothing, which will be made for them by their own men working for themselves, without troubling the employers of labour at all; next, a newspaper of their own, which will refuse any place to political agitators, leaders, partisans, and professional talkers, and be devoted to the questions which really concern working men, and especially the question of how best to employ the Power which is in their hands, and report continually what is doing, what must be done, and how it must be done. And lastly, emigration, so that in every family it shall be considered necessary for some to go, and the whole country shall be mapped out into districts, and only a certain number be allowed to remain.

Now, the world being so small as it is, and Englishmen and Scotchmen being so masterful that they must needs go straight to the front and stay there, it cannot but happen that the world will presently—that is, in two generations, or three at the most—be overrun with the good old English blood: whereupon until the round earth gets too small, which will not happen for another ten thousand years or so, there will be the purest, most delightful, and most heavenly Millennium. Rich people may come into it if they please, but they will not be wanted: in fact, rich people will die out, and it will soon come to be considered an unhappy thing, as it undoubtedly is, to be born rich.

Lastly, the Union will devote part of its energies to the consideration of how life may be made happy.

. . . .

—— 'Whose daughters ye are,' concluded the curate, closing his book, 'as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.'

He led the way into the vestry, where the book lay open, and sitting at the table he made the proper entries.

Then Harry took his place and signed. Now, behold! as he took the pen in his hand, Lord Jocelyn artfully held blotting-paper in readiness, and in such a manner as to hide the name of the bride: then Angela signed: then the witnesses, Lord Jocelyn and Captain Sorensen. And then there were shakings of hand and kissings. And before they came away the curate ventured timidly to whisper congratulations, and that he had no idea of the honour —— And then Angela stopped him, and bade him to her wedding feast that evening at the new Palace of Delight.

Then Lord Jocelyn distributed largess, the largest kind of largess, among the people of the church.

But it surely was the strangest of weddings. For when they reached the church door the bride and bridegroom kissed each other, and then he placed her in the carriage, in which the Davenants and Lord Jocelyn also seated themselves, and so they drove off.

'We shall see her again to-night,' said Harry. 'Come, Dick, we have got a long day to get through—seven hours. Let us go for a walk. I can't sit down: I can't rest: I can't do anything. Let us go for a walk, and wrangle.'

They left the girls and strode away, and did not return until it was past six o'clock, and already growing dark.

The girls, in dreadful lowness of spirits, and feeling as flat as so many pancakes, returned to their house and sat down with their hands in their laps, to do nothing for seven hours. Did one ever hear that the maidens at a marriage—do the customs of any country present an example of such a thing—returned to the bride's house without either bride or bridegroom? Did one ever hear of a marriage where the groom left the bride at the church door, and went away for a six hours' walk?

As for Captain Sorensen, he went to the Palace and pottered about, getting snubbed by the persons in authority. There was still much to be done before the evening, but there was time; all would be done. Presently he went away; but he, too, was restless and agitated: he could not rest at home: the possession of the secret, the thought of his daughter's future, the strange and unlooked-for happiness that had come to him in his old age—these things agitated him; nor could even his fiddle bring him any consolation; and the peacefulness of the Almshouse, which generally soothed him, this day irritated him. Therefore he wandered about, and presently appeared at the House, where he took dinner with the girls, and they talked about what would happen.

The first thing that happened was the arrival of a cart—a spring cart—with the name of a Regent Street firm upon it. The men took out a great quantity of parcels and brought them into the show-room. All the girls ran down to see what it meant, because on so great a day everything, said Nelly, must mean something.

'Name of Armitage?' asked the man. 'This is for you, Miss.—Name of Sorensen? This is for you.' And so on, a parcel for every one of the girls.

Then he went away, and they all looked at each other.

'Hadn't you better,' asked Captain Sorensen, 'open the parcels, girls?'

They opened them.

'Oh——h!'

Behold! for every girl such a present as none of them had ever imagined! The masculine pen cannot describe the sweet things which they found there; not silks and satins, but pretty things; with boots, because dressmakers are apt to be shabby in the matter of boots; and with handkerchiefs and pretty scarves and gloves and serviceable things of all sorts.

More than this: there was a separate parcel tied up in white paper for every girl, and on it, in pencil, 'For the wedding supper at the Palace of Delight.' And in it gauze, or lace, for bridesmaids' head-dress, and white kid gloves, and a necklace with a locket, and inside the locket a portrait of Miss Kennedy, and outside her Christian name, Angela. Also for each girl a little note, 'For ——, with Miss Messenger's love;' but for Nelly, whose parcel was like Benjamin's mess, the note was, 'For Nelly, with Miss Messenger's kindest love.'

'That,' said Rebekah, but without jealousy, 'is because you were Miss Kennedy's favourite. Well! Miss Messenger *must* be fond of her, and no wonder!'

'No wonder at all,' said Captain Sorensen.

And nobody guessed. Nobody had the least suspicion.

While they were all admiring and wondering Mrs. Bormalack ran over breathless.

'My dears!' she cried, 'look what's come!'

Nothing less than a beautiful black silk dress.

'Now go away, Captain Sorensen,' she said; 'you men are only hindering. And we've got to try on things. Oh! good gracious! To think that Miss Messenger would remember me, of all people in the world! To be sure, Mr. Bormalack was one of her collectors, and she may have heard about me——'

'No,' said Rebekah, 'it is through Miss Kennedy; no one has been forgotten who knew her.'

At seven o'clock that evening the great hall of the Palace was pretty well filled with guests. Some of them, armed with white wands, acted as stewards, and it was understood that on the arrival of Miss Messenger a lane was to be formed and the procession to the daïs at the end of the hall was to pass through that lane.

Outside, in the vestibule, stood the wedding party waiting: the bridegroom with his best man, and the bridesmaids in their white dresses, flowing gauze and necklaces, and gloves, and flowers—a very sweet and beautiful bevy of girls; Harry for the last time in his life, he thought with a sigh, in evening dress. Within the hall there were strange rumours flying about. It was said that Miss Messenger herself had been married that morning, and that the procession would be for her wedding; but others knew better: it was Miss Kennedy's wedding; she had married Harry Goslett, the man they called Gentleman Jack; and Miss Kennedy, everybody knew, was patronised by Miss Messenger.

At ten minutes past seven, two carriages drew up. From the first of these descended Harry's bride, led by Lord Jocelyn; and from the second the Davenants.

Yes, Harry's bride. But whereas in the morning she had been dressed in a plain white frock and white bonnet like her bridesmaids; she was now arrayed in white satin, mystic, wonderful, with white veil and white flowers, and round her white throat a necklace of sparkling diamonds, and diamonds in her hair.

Harry stepped forward with beating heart.

'Take her, boy,' said Lord Jocelyn proudly. 'But you have married—not Miss Kennedy at all—but Angela Messenger.'

Harry took his bride's hand in a kind of stupor. What did Lord Jocelyn mean?

'Forgive me, Harry,' she said, 'say you forgive me.'

Then he raised her veil and kissed her forehead before them all. But he could not speak, because all in a moment the sense of what this would mean poured upon his brain in a great wave, and he would fain have been alone.

It was Miss Kennedy indeed, but glorified into a great lady; oh!—oh—MISS MESSENGER!

The girls, frightened, were shrinking together; even Rebekah was afraid at the great and mighty name of Messenger.

Angela went among them, and kissed them all with words of encouragement. 'Can you not love me, Nelly,' she said, 'as well when I am rich as when I was poor?'

Then the chief officers in the Brewery advanced, offering congratulations in timid accents, because they knew now that Miss Kennedy the dressmaker, of whom such hard things had been sometimes said in their own presence and by their own wives, was no other than the sole partner in the Brewery, and that her husband had worked among them for a daily wage. What did these things mean? They made respectable men afraid. One person there was, however, who at sight of Miss

Messenger, for whom he was waiting with anxious heart, having a great desire to present his own case of unrewarded zeal, turned pale, and broke through the crowd with violence and fled. It was Uncle Bunker.

And then the stewards appeared at the open doors, and the procession was formed.

First the stewards themselves—being all clerks of the Brewery—walked proudly at the head, carrying their white wands like rifles. Next came Harry and the bride, at sight of whom the guests shouted and roared; next came Dick Coppin with Nelly, and Lord Jocelyn with Rebekah, and the Chief Brewer with Lady Davenant, of course in her black velvet and war paint, and Lord Davenant with Mrs. Bormalack, and the Chief Accountant with another bridesmaid, and Captain Sorensen with another, and then the rest.

Then the organ burst into a Wedding March, rolling and pealing about the walls and roof of the mighty hall, and amid its melodious thunder, and the shouts of the wedding guests, Harry led his bride slowly through the lane of curious and rejoicing faces, till they reached the dais.

When all were arranged, with the bride seated in the middle, her husband standing at her right and the bridesmaids grouped behind them, Lord Jocelyn stepped to the front and read in a loud voice part of the deed of gift, which he then gave with a profound bow to Angela, who placed it in her husband's hands.

Then she stepped forward and raised her veil, and stood before them all, beautiful as the day, and with tears in her eyes. Yet she spoke in firm and clear accents which all could hear. It was her first and last public speech; for Angela belongs to that rapidly diminishing body of women who prefer to let the men do all the public speaking.

'My dear friends,' she said, 'my kind friends: I wish first that you should clearly understand that this Palace has been invented and designed for you by my husband. All I have done is to build it. Now it is yours, with all it contains. I pray God that it may be used worthily, and for the joy and happiness of all. I declare this Palace of Delight open, the property of the people, to be administered and governed by them and them alone, in trust for each other.'

This was all she said, and the people cheered again, and the organ played 'God save the Queen.'

With this simple ceremony was the Palace of Delight thrown open to the world. What better beginning could it have than a wedding party? What better omen could there be than that the Palace, like the Garden of Eden, should begin with the happiness of a wedded pair?

. . . .

At this point there presented itself, to those who drew up the programme, a grave practical difficulty. It was this. The Palace could only be declared open in the Great Hall itself. Also, it could be only in the Great Hall that the banquet could take place. Now, how were the fifteen hundred guests to be got out of the way and amused while the tables were laid and the cloth spread? There could not be, it is true, the splendour and costly plate and épergnes and flowers of my Lord Mayor's great dinner, but ornament of some kind there must be upon the tables; and even with an army of drilled waiters it takes time to lay covers for fifteen hundred people.

But there was no confusion. Once more the procession was formed and marched round the hall, headed by the band of the Guards, visiting first the gymnasium, then the library, then the concert-room, and lastly the theatre. Here they paused, and the bridal party took their seats. The people poured in: when every seat was taken the stewards invited the rest into the concert-room. In the theatre a little sparkling comedy was played: in the concert-room a troupe of singers discoursed sweet madrigals and glees. Outside, the waiters ran backwards and forwards as busy as Diogenes with his tub, but more to the purpose.

When, in something over an hour, the performances were finished, the stewards found that the tables were laid, one running down the whole length of the hall, and shorter ones across the hall. Everybody had a card with his place upon it: there was no confusion, and while trumpeters blared a welcome, they all took their places in due order.

Angela and her husband sat in the middle of the long table; at Angela's left hand was Lord Jocelyn, at Harry's right Lady Davenant. Opposite the bride and bridegroom sat the Chief Brewer and the Chief Accountant. The bridesmaids spread out right and left. All Angela's friends and acquaintances of Stepney Green were there, except three. For old Mr. Maliphant was sitting as usual in the boarding house, conversing with unseen persons and laughing and brandishing a pipe; and with him Daniel Fagg sat hugging his book. And in his own office sat Bunker, sick at heart. For he remembered his officious private letter to Miss Messenger, and he felt that he had, indeed, gone and done it.

The rest of the long table was filled up by the clerks and superior officers of the Brewery: at the shorter tables sat the rest of the guests, including even the draymen and errand-boys. And so the feast began, while the band of the Guards played for them.

It was a royal feast, with the most magnificent cold sirloins of roast beef and rounds of salt beef, legs of mutton, saddles of mutton, haunches of mutton, loins of veal, ribs of pork, legs of pork, great hams, huge turkeys, capons, fowls, ducks, and geese, all done to a turn; so that the honest guests fell to with a mighty will, and wished that such a wedding might come once a month at least, with such a supper. And Messenger's beer, as much as you pleased, for everybody. At a moment like this, would one, even at the High Table, venture to ask, to say nothing of wishing, for aught but Messenger's beer?

After the hacked and mangled remains of the first course were removed there came puddings, pies, cakes, jellies, ices, blanc-mange, all kinds of delicious things.

And after this was done, and eating was stayed, and only the memory left of the enormous feed, the Chief Brewer rose and proposed in a few words the health of the bride and bridegroom. He said that it would be a lasting sorrow to all of them that they had not been present at the auspicious event of the morning; but that it was in some measure made up to them by the happiness they had enjoyed together that evening. If anything, he added, could make them pray more heartily for the happiness of the bride, it would be the thought that she refused to be married from her house in the West End, but came to Stepney among the workmen and managers of her own Brewery, and preferred to celebrate her wedding feast in the magnificent hall which she had given to the people of the place. And he had one more good thing to tell them. Miss Messenger, when she gave that precious thing, her hand, retained her name. There would still be a Messenger at the head of the good old House.

Harry replied in a few words, and the wedding cake went round. Then Dick Coppin proposed success to the Palace of Delight.

'Harry,' whispered Angela, 'if you love me, speak now, from your very heart.'

He sprang to his feet, and spoke to the people as they had never heard any yet speak.

After telling them what the Palace was, what it was meant to be, a place for the happiness and recreation of all; how they were to make their own amusements for themselves; how there were class-rooms where all kinds of arts and accomplishments would be taught; how, to ensure order and good behaviour, it was necessary that they should form their own volunteer police; how there were to be no politics and no controversies within those walls, and how the management of all was left to committees of their own choosing, he said,—

'Friends all, this is, indeed, such a thing as the world has never yet seen. You have been frequently invited to join together and combine for the raising of wages: you are continually invited to follow leaders who promise to reform land laws, when you have no land and never will have any; to abolish the House of Lords, in which you have no part, share, or lot; to sweep away a Church which does not interfere with you; but who have nothing—no, nothing to offer you, out of which any help or advantage will come to you. And you are always being told to consider life as a long period of resignation under inevitable suffering; and you are told to submit your reason, your will, yourselves, to authority, and all will be well with you. No one yet has given you the chance of making yourselves happy. In this place you will find, or you will make for yourselves, all the things which make the lives of the rich happy. Here you will have music, dancing, singing, acting, painting, reading, games of skill, games of chance, companionship, cheerfulness, light, warmth, comfort—everything. When these things have been enjoyed for a time they will become a necessity for you, and a part of the education for your young people. They will go on to desire other things which cannot be found by any others for you, but which must be found by yourselves and for yourselves. My wife has placed in your hands the materials for earthly joy: it lies with you to learn how to use them: it lies with you to find what other things are necessary; how the people who have all the Power there is, must find out what they want, and help themselves to it, standing shoulder to shoulder by means of that Power: how those enemies are not the rich, whom your brawlers in Whitechapel Road ignorantly accuse, but quite another kind—and you must find out for yourselves who these are. It is not by setting poor against rich, or by hardening the heart of rich against poor, that you will succeed: it is by independence and by knowledge. All sorts and conditions of men are alike. As are the vices of the rich, so are your own; as are your virtues, so are theirs. But, hitherto, the rich have had things which you could not get. Now all that is altered: in the Palace of Delight we are equal to the richest: there is nothing which we, too, cannot have: what they desire we desire; what they have we shall have: we can all love; we can all laugh; we can all feel the power of music; we can dance and sing; or we can sit in peace and meditate. In this Palace, as in the outer world, remember that you have the Power. The time for envy, hatred, and accusations has gone by: because we working men have, at last, all the Power there is to have. Let us use it well. But the Palace will be for joy and happiness, not for political wrangles. Brothers and sisters, we will no longer sit down in resignation: we will take the same joy in this world that the rich have taken. Life is short for us all: let us make the most of it for ourselves and for each other. There are so many joys within our reach; there are so many miseries which we can abolish. In this house, which is a Temple of Praise, we shall all together continually be thinking how to bring more sunshine into our lives, more change, more variety, more happiness.'

A serious ending; because Harry spoke from his heart. As he took his seat in deep silence, the organ broke forth again and played, while the people stood, the grand Old Hundredth Psalm.

A serious ending to the feast; but Life is serious.

. . . .

Ten minutes later the bride rose, and the band played a joyful march, while the wedding procession once more formed and marched down the hall, and the people poured out into the streets to cheer, and Angela and her husband drove away for their honeymoon.

The Palace of Delight is in working order now, and Stepney is already transformed. A new period began on the opening night for all who were present. For the first time they understood that life may be happy: for the first time they resolved that they would find out for themselves the secret of happiness. The angel with the flaming sword has at last stepped from the gates of the earthly Paradise, and we may now enter therein and taste, unreproved, of all the fruits except the apples of the Tree of Life—which has, indeed, been removed, long since, to another Place.

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